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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

# PRINCIPALS' INVOLVEMENT IN TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

BY

CLINTON EDWARD NEIS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF EDUCATION

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EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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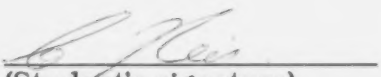

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**ABSTRACT**

The central purpose of this study was to determine how teachers in this study pursued professional growth and what role they perceived their principals to have in this growth. The study is a naturalistic interpretive study based upon semi-structured interviews of eight teachers, examining their perceptions regarding what factors have led to their own professional growth and how they perceive their principals have been or could be a part of this growth.

A mix of male and female teachers at various stages of their career were sought in an attempt to obtain rich and comprehensive descriptions from a range of experienced teachers. This strategy proved valuable in providing a range of insights which differed greatly from the first year teacher through to the most experienced teacher.

The study's findings and three major themes relating to professional growth of teachers which emerged provide valuable insights for the principal who is interested in enhancing teacher effectiveness.

It became apparent that teacher's growth needs changed with years of teaching experience. Evaluation was viewed as conducive to growth by newer teachers, whereas self evaluation and reflection were held in higher regard by experienced teachers. Conferences and workshops were valued by beginning teachers who required many new skills but such professional development was often felt to be a waste of time to their experienced counterparts.

Growth required time, space, and support and principals were perceived to be instrumental in supplying these necessary ingredients. Support from colleagues through sharing, observation, and discussion

was seen as paramount to teacher growth. Teachers relied on principals mostly for support with procedural matters and discipline problems, and turned to colleagues for most of their growth needs.

The attitudes and abilities of principals greatly impact on teacher growth by shaping the school environment to allow for growth to occur through the aforementioned channels. The actions of principals can both impede and promote teacher growth and effectiveness.

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I am indebted to many people for the opportunity to return to school this year and for the help I recieved with help with this thesis.

A special thanks goes to Dr. Margaret Haughey. Through our many discussions this year, she has helped me view education from a much wider perspective and I know that I will be a better educator for the experience.

I greatly appreciate the time committed by the eight teachers who took part in this study. I thoroughly enjoyed the interviews and learned much from their insights.

The growth I experienced this year would not have been possible had the Wetaskiwin Public School Board not granted me an educational leave to return to university. I thank them for this opportunity and hope that others will be as fortunate in the future.

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# CHAPTER 1

# THE PROBLEM

## Introduction

Each year numerous young adults embark on an exciting new journey in the profession of educating students. These first year teachers nervously approach the profession with hope, enthusiasm, knowledge, and energy. Some will sustain and build upon these admirable qualities and apply them to their profession for many years, while others will slowly lose much of their initial enthusiasm and energy toward their job. Is it possible that teachers can be supported in their profession to maintain the initial positive feelings with which they first approached teaching and be encouraged to strive for continued growth with regard to educating students? The intent of this study is to acquire insights as to if and how this can be accomplished and, in particular, what part the school principal plays in promoting and maintaining effective teaching.

## Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study will be to find possible answers to the question: In what ways can principals help teachers continue to be effective throughout their careers?

A number of more specific questions were first proposed to serve as guides to the development of the study and to the analysis of the data. These questions were as follows:

1. How do teachers themselves sustain their interest in teaching throughout the years?
2. Who helps and in what ways do they help teachers remain effective throughout their careers?
3. How do principals facilitate the work of teachers?
4. Can principals influence the culture and climate of schools to allow for greater teacher effectiveness?
5. What have been major deterrents to continued growth for teachers?

The study was to be guided by but not restricted to these questions. Other questions were expected to emerge during the process of doing the data gathering and analysis and this did indeed occur. After completion of the interviews, and during the analysis of the data, it became apparent to the researcher that a slight change in the guiding questions would better serve the data of this study. The questions as they later evolved are as follows:

1. How do teachers themselves sustain their interest and effectiveness in teaching throughout the years?
2. How do principals facilitate the work of teachers?
3. Who else helps and in what ways do they help teachers remain effective?
4. What have been major deterrents to the continued growth and effectiveness for teachers?

The initial question concerning culture and climate was subsumed under questions two and four.

## Significance of the Study

This proposed study has both practical and theoretical significance. The results of this study should be of value to teachers, principals, senior administrators, and researchers.

For teachers and principals, the results of this study may yield useful ideas suitable for implementing in their own schools to enhance existing educational processes. The study may also provide insights of value to senior administrators in the forming and implementing of school jurisdictions' policies.

Researchers differ greatly in their beliefs regarding effective leadership in schools. The results of this study may provide credence for, or lend support to, the theoretical base that is already in existence.

## Assumptions

One assumption being made is that principals, through their beliefs and actions, play an active role in teacher effectiveness and professional development. As well, it is being assumed that the principal is a key factor in the formation of a school's organizational culture and that this culture affects teacher effectiveness. It is also assumed that the teachers interviewed felt comfortable enough with me as a researcher to be open and honest, and that they could accurately portray their perceptions and feelings regarding professional growth and teacher effectiveness.

## Delimitations

This study was delimited to the comments and perceptions of eight practicing secondary teachers with no previous administrative experience. The number of respondents allowed for semi-structured, in-depth interviews with each participant.

## Limitations

One possible limitation may have been the ability of the researcher to develop an adequate rapport with the respondents to obtain applicable information. The ability of respondents to recall relevant experiences or practices which may have contributed to their professional betterment may also have been a limitation. This concern was addressed by providing the respondents with a complete transcript of the initial interview prior to a second contact, allowing them time to reflect on further pertinent information.

## Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 1 introduces the nature of the problem as well as the purpose and significance of this study. In addition, basic assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the study are discussed. In Chapter 2, a synthesis of the research on leadership, school culture and climate, and on teacher professional growth and development is presented. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology, research procedures, and data collection techniques used in the study. In Chapter 4, a content analysis of the

interview data and the themes which emerged from the analysis of the data are provided. The final chapter, Chapter 5 includes a summary of the study, my personal reflections, and implications for practice and future research.

## CHAPTER 2

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Introduction

Can effective leadership enhance the quality of education for students by promoting effective teaching? This chapter will investigate the literature related to the concept of leadership, and particularly leadership in education, and explore what influence leadership can have on the internal structure of schools and, ultimately, on the professional growth and development of teachers.

### Leadership

There is much focus on the function of the school principal in today's changing educational institutions. One major theme centers on the reorientation of the principalship from management to leadership. As stated by Beck and Murphy (1993), "competent management . . . is likely to prove insufficient to meet the challenges of leading schools in a new age. Schools need leadership, and principals of the 1990's must change to meet that need" (p. 190).

The concept of leadership has been an area of interest, not just to educational institutions but to all organizations, for decades. There seems to be unlimited theories and definitions attempting to portray the true meaning of the term "leadership." Robbins (1988) contends that "the leadership literature is voluminous, and much of it is confusing and contradictory" (p. 118). In an effort to "make his way through the forest"

(p.118) of leadership literature, Robbins has categorized the theories attempting to explain leadership into three basic approaches. He describes these as: (a) Trait Theories, (b) Behavioral Theories, and (c) Contingency Theories. A brief look at these categories is warranted to understand present day leadership.

Trait theories revolve around the notion that leaders have certain characteristics which enable them to be effective leaders. Hanson (1991) says "the *classical theory perspective* finds the leader in the upper reaches of the hierarchy and endowed with natural psychological traits that give him or her advantages over most mortals" (p. 176). Many lists of these traits have been proposed. Examples of the characteristics that have been presented as essential for leaders are: intelligence, charisma, decisiveness, enthusiasm, strength, bravery, integrity, self-confidence, and task related knowledge. Trait theories of leadership have definite limitations, one of them being the fact that they ignore the needs of the followers.

Behavioral Theories viewed the "behavior" exhibited by the leader as being the key feature in effective leadership. There was little success in finding significant correlation between patterns of behavior of the leader and group performance. These theories seemed to ignore the situational factors which would affect the results of an organization.

Contingency theories are by far the most complex notions of effective leadership. Many leadership models have been proposed, each trying to consider the complexity involved in the leaders' decisions. Some such models are the Autocratic-Democratic Continuum Model, the Fiedler Model, the Path-Goal Model, Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Model, and the Leader-Participation Model. What these

theories have in common, and what possibly gives them more value in helping leaders, is that they consider the different aspects involved in the situation. These models view such factors as the task itself, the subordinates' characteristics, the leader-member relationships, and the environment as being important to effective leadership. Despite this work, none of these approaches to defining and describing leadership has been viewed as extremely successful or helpful.

## School Leadership

School based leadership has undergone many transformations. Sergiovanni (1980, cited in Rossow, 1990) defined the school leader as "the individual charged with the task of directing and coordinating the group activities necessary to achieve or change goals" (p. 11). Bolin (1989) says that "leadership in the 1990's becomes a support function for teachers rather than a mechanism for the control of teaching" (p. 8). The notion of control over subordinates is no longer considered by most researchers to be the best approach to leadership in schools. Concepts such as the empowerment of others and collaborative decision making are now viewed as more effective methods for attaining high achievement in schools.

Sergiovanni (1991) maintains that "empowerment is the natural complement to accountability. One cannot hold teachers, parents, and schools accountable without giving them the necessary responsibility to make the decisions that they think are best" (p. 137). The focus of the principal's role appears to be changing from the head of a hierarchy to the coordinator for empowerment of others.

With regard to collaborative decisions, there is much support in the organizational literature for its effectiveness, both at accomplishing goals and building staff morale. Sergiovanni (1991) contends that "it is principals, teachers, and parents, bonded together in a common cause, who are given the necessary discretion that they need to function effectively" (p. 137). Rossow (1990) supports the theme in his statement that "the goal of the principal would be to establish integration of thought through teamwork" (p. 83). Blumberg and Jonas (1987) state that "to be considered competent, to be listened to, to be asked to collaborate with one's organizational supervisor, . . . produces a feeling of being valued" (p. 62).

Barth (1988) also touts the ideal of "shared leadership" and envisions the "school as a community of leaders" (p. 640). He offers nine steps for the principal who wishes to work towards shared leadership in the school: articulating the goal, relinquishing control, entrusting teachers, involving teachers in decision making, assigning responsibility wisely, sharing responsibility for failure, attributing success to the teacher, believing in teachers, and admitting ignorance (pp. 640-642). Barth (1990) further adds that "successful principals are successful less as charismatic authority figures than as coalition builders. It has become increasingly important to share leadership and to no longer even aspire to fully understand and control every aspect of the school" (p. 133).

The leadership role in schools in recent years has also taken on another important dimension, that being the notion of doing what is morally right. Beck and Murphy (1993) contend that the [principal's] base of influence must be from professional expertise and moral imperative rather than line of authority" (p. 191). Sergiovanni's theme of

"moral leadership" seems to support this. He emphasizes that "what we need is an expanded theoretical and operational foundation for leadership practice that will give balance to the full range of values and bases of authority. I refer to this expanded foundation as the *moral dimension in leadership*" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. xiii).

The moral leadership concept implies that "what is right" will get done, providing the school environment allows for this. The principal's role is that of structuring the school environment to accommodate the moral intuition of the educators. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) state that "supervisors have the responsibility to promote a moral environment in which the total [school] community can better function as a community of learners and a community of moral agents" (p. 65).

Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) discuss school leadership in terms of "Supervision I and Supervision II." They contend that "Supervision I is something that supervisors do to teachers" while "Supervision II is a set of ideals and skills that can be translated into process that can help teachers and help schools function more effectively. Supervision is something that not only principals and hierarchically designated supervisors do but also teachers and others. Supervision II is based on 'what is rewarding gets done'" (p. 37). To go along with this concept, Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) believe that principals should lead from the positions of "professional and moral authority," as well as from the more traditional positions of "bureaucratic, personal, and technical-rational authority" (pp. 23-24).

The literature suggests that there has been a move away from a control model of leadership to more of a cooperative approach. This not

only applies to leadership in education, but to organizational leadership in general.

## Instructional Leadership

One aspect of leadership that has been the subject of much research through the 1980s is instructional leadership. As Beck and Murphy (1993) state, "a dominant assumption of the eighties . . . is that the principal can and should become directly involved with the teaching/learning process" (p. 149). Rossow (1990) is even more explicit in saying that "today's school principal must be an instructional leader in order to implement what is known about 'effective schools' and 'effective teaching practices'" (p. ix). This implies that principals need not only be affective administrators and managers, but they must also be educational leaders.

Does this imply that the principal must be the expert in all aspects of education in order to be of help to the teachers? Barth (1990) thinks not. He contends that "the increasing specialization of teachers signals that the principal can no longer be the master teacher well versed in instructing handicapped children, students who are gifted and talented, beginning reading, and advanced math" (p. 133). It is essential to involve teachers in the decisions required to run effective schools.

Ubben and Hughes (1987) state that "instructional leadership has as its basic purpose the improvement of the school" (p. 17). It is much easier to make this statement than it is to devise an exact plan or procedure to accomplish the feat. Ubben and Hughes (1987) suggest four major themes for school improvement:

1. The strengthening of teacher skills

2. The systematizing of the curriculum
3. The improvement of organizational structures
4. The involvement of parents and other citizens in a school/community partnership. (p. 17)

Much research has attempted to address the question as to how principals might enter into the role of an instructional leader. Little and Bird (1987, cited in Beck & Murphy, 1993) suggest a quality necessary for principals to be instructional leaders. Little and Bird maintain the principal must have "a 'close to the classroom' orientation" (p. 150) to be effective in this practice. In a study conducted by Blase (1987) dealing with teachers' perspectives of effective leadership, Blase states that "the willingness of the principal to 'mix with . . . teachers and students' was, in the teachers' view, related to caring, guts, empathy, dedication, and generally the kind of leadership involvement essential to individual and organizational improvement" (p. 597). More support for the importance of being 'close to the classroom' comes from Rossow (1990) when he writes that "principals in effective schools model an academic emphasis by visiting classrooms, talking with teachers about their teaching, . . ." (p. 35).

Scholars have attempted to clarify the concept of instructional leadership by identifying behaviors of effective school principals. Beck and Murphy (1993) indicate two such behaviors that have received much attention, namely: (a) problem solving, and (b) providing needed resources to teachers. These authors believe that the two are directly related in that "principals who solve problems are portrayed as those who are able to secure materials, money, time, or information" (p. 151) for their staff. The National Association of Secondary School Principals'

*Handbook on Effective Instructional Leadership* (1984, cited in Ubben & Hughes, 1987) lists four traits of successful instructional leaders:

1. They hold high expectations for teachers and staff.
2. They spend a major portion of their day in working with teachers and improving the instructional program.
3. They work in identifying and diagnosing instructional problems.
4. They are deeply involved in the school's "culture" climate to influence it in positive ways. (p. 17)

Seyfarth (1991), with regard to instructional leadership, maintains that "in effective schools, the principal exerts leadership by supporting and encouraging the staff and by serving as an advocate of change" (p. 16).

Devising an exact list of behaviors or traits for successful instructional leaders to use as their guide seems unlikely. It does seem apparent, however, that effective instructional leaders do have in common the ability to somehow influence the schools' environment, or as some literature refers to it, the internal structure of the school. Ubben and Hughes (1987) support this by saying:

> The principal's instructional leadership behaviors should have a much more immediate influence on the internal structure of the school. A school's internal structure includes its instructional practices, organizational structure, climate, and culture. It is in the design, development, implementation, and interaction of these internal structures that the principal has opportunity for maximum influence on student outcomes. (p. 18)

Closer examination of some of the elements of the internal structures within schools may reveal how successful principals succeed at influencing successful teaching.

## School Culture

What is meant by "school culture" or as much research refers to it, "organizational culture"? Robbins (1988) contends that "organizational culture refers to a system of shared meaning held by the members that distinguishes this organization from other organizations" (p. 206). Hanson (1991) adds that organizational culture is composed of the shared beliefs, expectations, and values and norms of conduct of members" (p. 68). He goes on to state that "even more than the forces of bureaucracy, the organization's culture is the glue that binds people together" (p. 68). Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) reinforce this belief by stating that "a supportive school climate, the presence of collegial values, shared decision making, and a school culture provide a sense of purpose and define for teachers a shared covenant" (p. 69).

A principal's awareness of the existence and strength of a school's culture can greatly enhance that principal's effectiveness in promoting teacher growth and development. With respect to school culture, Duke (1986) submits that "fashioning a vision to which an entire school can commit heart and mind is, I suspect, one of the central challenges facing contemporary school administrators" (p. 32). In support of this, Ubben and Hughes (1987) assert that "culture building . . . is the institutionalization of positive student, staff, and community attitudes toward maintaining an effective school. A positive organizational culture is created, developed, and encouraged by quality leadership" (p. 25).

Manipulating a school's culture, with the intent of creating an environment which supports and encourages teacher growth, is a very difficult task for any administrator. Maeroff (1993) asserts that "the

culture that usually prevails in an elementary or secondary school is not friendly to change. Teachers can be made to do things, but when they feel that the change is unneeded, the chances of success are dimmed" (p. 8). This implies that if principals want to improve schools, they must demonstrate to, or convince, the teachers that the changes are needed and will be to their benefit.

Principals that wish to shape a school's culture so that all staff have shared beliefs and norms of conduct, need to include teachers in this shaping. It is essential that a feeling of unity exist among those on a school's staff. Bolin (1989) believes this can be done if "the administrator works with educators for unity. Common goals are negotiated, goals to which all are committed" (p. 87). Bolin adds that:

> instead of invading the culture of the school, . . . [an effective leader] recognizes the uniqueness of each school and respects its culture, even when there are needed improvements. [The principal's task] is to understand the culture of the school and to become a participant in reshaping it as perceptions are enlarged and new goals negotiated. (pp. 88-89)

Principals who wish to manipulate a school's culture, no matter how honorable their intentions may be, must do so slowly and carefully. Improving teacher effectiveness, and ultimately school effectiveness, must include involvement on the part of the teachers themselves. All must recognize and believe in the course of action, or goals, that are being pursued.

The terms "school culture" and "school climate" are in "every-day-use" often viewed as being synonymous. A review of the related literature suggests otherwise. Sergiovanni (1991) describes the difference as follows:

> Climate is concerned with the process and style of a school's organizational life rather than its content and substance. School

> culture, by contrast, is more normative than school climate in the sense that it is a reflection of the shared values, beliefs, and commitments of school members. (p. 218)

Culture refers more to the beliefs and values of the members within the organization, whereas climate relates more to their feelings and attitudes about the organizational setting.

The underlying culture of a school does appear, however, to influence the formation of the school's climate. Hoy and Miskel (1982) relate that "the climate is an end product of the school groups -- students, teachers, administrators -- as they work to balance the organizational and individual aspects of a social system" (p. 185). Of school climate, Ubben and Hughes (1987) note that "development of a positive school climate requires the foundation of a good organizational structure and can be enhanced by a number of factors, including positive student control and the encouragement of parent participation" (p. 24). Other actions they list as helping to develop and maintain a healthy school climate are: (a) participatory management; (b) encouraging collegiality; (c) building trust and confidence; (d) showing appreciation and recognition; (e) caring; (f) sharing humor; and (g) open, honest communication.

How important is the notion of a healthy school climate to good teaching? Johnson (1990) suggests it is very important in her statement that "what is often overlooked or discounted by those who want good schools is that the character of the school as a workplace affects not only the satisfaction of faculty, but the work that even the most talented, highly motivated, well-intentioned teachers can do there" (p. 10). Principals then need to be aware of and attempt to influence the school's climate in a positive fashion.

As indicated in much of the literature, developing a school climate which is conducive to effective teaching, falls upon the shoulders of the principal. The principal, and that person's leadership style, will influence many of the factors which will directly or indirectly influence the school's climate. Barth (1990) believes that principals "need to be able to set general directions and create environments and structures that enable everyone in the school community to discover their own skills and talents and thereby be free to help students discover theirs" (p.145).

## Professional Growth and Development

Effective professional growth and development of teachers is dependent upon many factors. Some of these factors may be beyond the influence of school principals, while others are definitely within their control. To enhance the professional growth of teachers, it is essential that principals be attuned to which aspects of a teacher's effectiveness they can influence.

Principals need to be sensitive to teachers' feelings if they are to successfully aid with teacher improvement. Blumberg and Jonas (1987) share a metaphor with a message in the form of an interoffice memo:

> Date: Any day of the school year
> To: Any supervisor
> From: Any teacher
> Re: Your request to go swimming in my pool
>
> Please be advised that it is my pool and that I issue invitations only to those people with whom I feel comfortable. (p. 59)

They go on to say that "supervisors, of course, may enter any classroom, but they must be psychologically accepted by the teacher while they are

there if the process is to be anything more than a ritual. . . . we believe that most teachers want to be better than they already are. Increasing mastery of one's work leads to a confirmation of self worth" (p. 59). The skill that principals must master is how to "get invited into their pool" and be welcome enough to work with them at "improving their swimming."

Another effective method for the improvement of teaching is for teachers to observe other teachers. This allows for the attainment of new ideas which can be implemented in their own classes, as well as reflection upon their own teaching methods and behaviors. Seyfarth (1991) maintains that "peer observation alone appears to be about as effective as peer coaching in producing behavior change among teachers when it is carried out in an atmosphere of trust" (p. 186).

Peer observation needs to be valued by the principal before it can be expected to occur in schools. Time must be made available for teachers to watch other teachers. This again demonstrates the importance of effective leadership in schools, as principal support is necessary if teachers are to implement new classroom practices.

Wildman and Niles (1987) believe there are three conditions necessary for teachers to learn and to improve their teaching: (a) autonomy, (b) collaboration, and (c) time. Administrators are instrumental in providing these conditions for success to the teachers in that they have the means to shape the school's structure.

Of autonomy, Wildman and Niles contend that "complex learning demands that learners have substantial freedom to direct their own growth" (p. 6). They believe there is added value to encouraging autonomy in that "the delegation of intellectual control at the level of the

teacher . . . has the potential to promote and sustain real learning because it fosters individual motivation and builds self-confidence" (p. 7).

With regard to collaboration, Wildman and Niles suggest three ways in which this is important to professional growth:

> First, collegial groups can expand a teacher's level of expertise by supplying a source of intellectual provocation and new ideas.
>
> Second, it breaks the grip of psychological isolation from other adults that characterizes the teacher's workplace.
>
> Third, a collaborative group can furnish the emotional support and encouragement a teacher needs to cope with the risk that is inherently involved in learning to teach well. (p. 8)

Lieberman (1988) also stresses the importance of collaboration to the growth of teachers. She states that "working in collaborative situations exposes teachers to new ideas, to working on problems collectively, and to learning from the very people who understand the complexity of their work best -- their own colleagues" (p. 5).

The third condition mentioned by Wildman and Niles (1987), time, is equally essential to promote effective teaching. They maintain that time can be one of the most important investments made to improve educational quality. The success of teacher development can depend upon principals structuring the school's schedule to periodically free teachers from their duties, allowing them to actively pursue their own professional growth.

Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) maintain that another condition necessary for the growth of teachers is support from the principal. They state that "the supervisor is obliged to participate with teachers in the task of bringing youngsters to the condition of learning. The supervisor does this by supporting the teachers' search for improved responsiveness to their students" (p. 55).

Recent studies related to school principals' beliefs and actions and how they affect the actions of teachers show a strong relationship does exist. Cole's research on teacher-principal relationships (1990), as viewed by teachers, suggests three areas of importance to teachers: "(a) being supportive of teachers, (b) having trust in teachers, and (c) having a shared philosophy" (p. 80).

Boyd (1989) researched teachers' critical incidents in an attempt to enhance her administrative skills. She states "through the study I came to appreciate the diversity among teachers in how they grow and develop professionally." She concludes by commenting "simply stated, talk, time, flexibility, and continuous effort is the necessary work for a school leader" (p. 110).

## Summary

There have been several theories of leadership proposed over the years. These theories have evolved to better serve the needs of the different types of organizations they serve.

The literature suggests that a principal's leadership style, mannerisms towards students and teachers, and the value placed on continued personal and professional growth, will have a great bearing on the school's effectiveness. Instructional leadership is a concept with a variety of interpretations from several different scholars.

It is further suggested in the literature that the principal is an integral part of a school's culture and climate. Much of the tone or atmosphere of the school comes from, or is determined by the principal. Blase (1987) found in his study of dimensions of effective leadership that:

> effective school principals appeared to contribute to school cultures viewed as associative; such cultures were described as cohesive: Interactions between principals and teachers and between teachers and others were viewed as cooperative, empathetic, supportive, respectful, equitable, and productive. (p. 607).

Maeroff (1993) poses three crucial questions with regard to teacher growth and development. He asks, "what if schools were to become places not only where students learn, but where teachers learn as well? What if the climate and organization of the schools were such that teachers were encouraged to collaborate and to pursue professional growth together? . . . why should students be the only ones in schools who grow?" (p.12). Maeroff proposes that "there is apt to be better teaching and improved learning when professional development is no longer viewed as a fragmented add-on to what teachers do. Instead it should be regarded as a basic component in the professional life of the teacher, as ingrained as day-to-day instructional activities" (p. 146).

If in fact principals are to influence the effectiveness of teachers under their charge, it appears they must encourage the continued professional growth of these teachers. The issue of leadership style seems to be the key to success in schools. Instructional leadership, with the principals being involved in the learning process, is essential. This will enable the principal to fully comprehend the importance of what the teacher does and the value of insuring teacher growth. To lead teachers effectively , the administrators must become attuned to the factors which influence teachers. Only then will the principal be able to assist teachers strive to attain their full potential. Pounder (1987, cited in Beck and Murphy, 1993) states that:

> Teachers themselves are the key resource in schools, and the basic challenge for instructional leaders is to tap and cultivate teachers as

> vital sources of information regarding problems and strategies for enhancing their work and the general working conditions in their school. (p. 168)

If administrators value and encourage the growth of teachers, it is inevitable that the effects will be portrayed in the classrooms and the students will be the benefactors.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

The research methodology for this study was designed to attain understandings from the teachers interviewed as to how they viewed their principals' impact on their teaching effectiveness. This chapter provides an account of the methodology used in this study.

Research design and instrumentation are discussed, as well as a description of the selection process. Also included is a brief profile of the respondents and the method of data collection and analysis used are explained.

## Research Design

The study being presented is a naturalistic interpretive study based upon interviews of teachers, seeking their perceptions regarding their own professional growth and development aimed at effectiveness, and how their principals have been or could be a part of this growth.

When using an interpretive approach, it must be understood that the information gained is being presented from the point of view of the respondent. The reality of their situations is based upon the meanings they give to certain events. As expressed by Bogdan and Biklen (1982), "it all depends on where you are sitting, how things look to you" (p. 31). What one teacher views as a help in the classroom, another may regard as a hindrance.

## Research Instrument

The research questions were initially developed following readings of literature related to educational leadership, school culture and climate, and teacher growth and development. As well, questions were developed through the researcher's personal experience from thirteen years of teaching. These questions were refined through discussion with and advice from my advisor. The interview guiding questions are included in Appendix A. Additional questions were expected to emerge during the interview process, and this did indeed happen.

A semi-structured interview schedule was prepared, with the intent of allowing for the interviews to be guided mostly by the responses of the participants. This follows with Bogdan and Biklen's (1982) notion that "the interview is used to gather descriptive data in the subject's own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (p. 135).

## Data Sources

The respondents for the study were eight teachers, presently employed at the secondary grade levels, these being grades seven to twelve. Participants were selected from past colleagues and from suggestions from present colleagues of teachers who may have been willing to participate in this study. A mix of male and female teachers were chosen, as well as teachers at various stages in their careers and professional development. An attempt was also made to have

participants from various subject areas, including teachers of Special Education, involved.

## Profile of the Respondents

This section is intended to give the reader a greater knowledge of the type of respondents that participated in the study. To assure participant anonymity, more detailed information about the individuals could not be shared.

Gender. The study consisted of four female and four male teachers.

Experience. Participants of the study ranged in their years of teaching from a first year teacher to a teacher with 29 years of experience.

Subject Areas. The respondents' main areas of teaching consisted of English, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Special Education. These teachers had also taught in other areas such as Physical Education and Drama.

Centers Taught In. Five of the participants were from large urban school districts, while three were from smaller towns in rural communities.

Marital Status. Two of the teachers participating in the study were single, two were married with no children, and four were married with children.

Education. All participants of the study had a Bachelor of Education degree, and four were presently attending University during the summer or on a full time basis to attain a Masters degree in Education.

## Data Collection

Interviews were the main method for collecting the data. The interviews were semi-structured allowing the opportunity to explore other relevant areas of interest as they emerged.

In December of 1993, teachers were contacted to inform them of the purpose of the study and to determine their willingness to participate in the study. Surprisingly, every teacher contacted was very willing to take part in the study. Permission was not sought from the superintendent of the corresponding school jurisdictions, as the interviews were to take place during the teachers' own time, and out of the school setting.

At the time of the first interview, the researcher again explained the purpose of the study to the respondents, the commitment requested of them, and the fact that their involvement was voluntary. It was made clear to the respondents that they were free to opt out of any part or all of the study at any time. They were asked to sign a consent letter (see Appendix B) which informed them that the interviews would be tape recorded and that they would be permitted to read the transcript of their interview. At this time, if they so desired, parts could be clarified or deleted as they saw fit. The consent letter also assured the teachers that the information would be treated with complete anonymity and confidentiality.

Prior to the interviews, this researcher had some topics in mind which it was hoped that the interview would shed light on. For some of the interviews, the discussion stayed very close to the initial topics, while discussion was much freer for other interviews, covering a wide variety of topics.

The second contact with the respondents was to discuss the clarity and content of the transcripts. Some discussion of the intent of some comments took place, but on the whole, very little data was changed.

## Data Analysis

The process and purpose of data analysis is summarized well by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) when they say:

> Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others. Analysis involves working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others. (p. 145)

This describes well the process undertaken by this researcher.

The data analysis was ongoing from the time of the first contact with the teachers. Their willingness and eagerness indicated to the researcher their true interest in the topic of the study. Personal journal notations, giving my impressions of the interview and suggestions for future improvement, were written after each interview. These journal entries, along with field notes and interview transcripts, were later read several times in an attempt to seek relevant ideas from the information.

Initial categories were derived during the interviews and from first readings of the transcripts, and were added to as more in-depth readings were undertaken. The data were coded using these categories by means of marginal notes and highlighting in the text. More categories emerged as attempts were made to categorize the transcripts. Some of these reflected categories were identified in the review of the literature.

At this point, a computer program called Fact Finder was used, a data base which was very helpful in grouping the respondents' comments into information banks with similar content or meaning. This allowed the comments in each category to be printed out in hard copy, later to be read, reordered, and written about as to their meanings.

In searching for a framework to provide a structure to the emerged categories, various patterns were tried. In the end, the guiding questions, with minor revisions, seemed to provide a very suitable structure. As a result, the data are presented in the four main groupings: How teachers sustain their interest and effectiveness in teaching, How principals facilitate the work of teachers, Who else helps and in what ways do they help teachers remain effective, and Major deterrents to growth for teachers.

The final part of the data analysis required the developing of themes. This involved rereading of the transcripts and data analysis chapter seeking a deeper understanding of what the respondents were saying, thus emerged the relevant themes as this researcher saw them.

**Trustworthiness of the Data**

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, according to Guba and Lincoln (1985), the researcher must make certain "that any and all appropriate steps have been taken to assure that data from human sources and contexts are meaningful, trackable, verifiable, and grounded in the real-life situations from which they were derived" (p. 250). This researcher has made every effort to achieve this end.

This study meets the guidelines established by the University of Alberta's Department of Educational Administration Ethics committee. The respondents were assured of the anonymity and of confidentiality of information shared during the interviews.

The interviews for this study were tape recorded and transcribed in full to insure the experiences shared by the respondents were accurately captured. To insure confidentiality, the taped interviews were transcribed by the researcher himself and the respondents were allowed to read only their own transcript. Respondents were provided with copies of their transcripts, allowing them time to reflect on the accuracy of their statements. Where necessary, follow-up interviews were conducted to add to the wealth of information. A personal journal was kept by this researcher, noting any insights or observations at the time of the interview or during later analysis.

Possible categories and themes were discussed with fellow educators, other than those partaking in the study. Such discussions helped this researcher decide if the categories suggested were appropriate in light of these educators' experiences. Two such educators, administrators in my school jurisdiction, provided valuable assistance in this area. The researcher's advisor also reviewed some of the transcripts and discussed possible categories as well as analysis strategies.

During the process of data analysis, the researcher attempted to make the information credible and transferable by providing sufficient quotes to assure reader understanding of the situations discussed by the participants of the study. This process also provided a form of internal triangulation, adding clarity to some of the respondents' thoughts.

## Summary

This naturalistic interpretive study focused on the understandings of eight teachers obtained through semi-structured interviews. Care was taken to review transcripts for categories, patterns, and themes and to check these with others. The findings of this process are described in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER 4

# FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

## Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the interview data gathered from the eight teacher respondents in the study. The analysis is presented in four parts to correspond with the guiding questions of the study as they have been revised. These guiding questions have provided the framework for the presentation of the categorized information that emerged from the data.

The intent of this chapter is to provide the reader with my understanding of the perceptions given by the teachers in this study relating to how they sustain their interest and effectiveness in teaching, how principals facilitate their work, the people and practices which help them remain effective, and the major deterrents to their growth as teachers.

## How Teachers Sustain Interest and Effectiveness In Teaching

Each interview began with a discussion of effective teaching. Responses to this varied from simple one sentence answers to complex, philosophical discussions. The respondents also relayed to me many of the methods, both informal and formal, that they use for professional development and growth within their field. The following section describes the major thoughts portrayed by the eight respondents related to these categories.

## Effective Teaching

When asked to relay their understanding of what they felt was effective teaching, seven of the eight teachers talked of "being able to get the concepts across to the kids." There were differing views as to how this is best done. The most common theme that emerged when asking the teachers to describe effective teaching appears to be getting the students interested in the subject matter in some way. The opinion of how to get students interested varied throughout.

Ann felt that effective teachers showed "passion for their subject, which will get kids curious about the subject," while Betty talked of making the subject matter "interesting." She stated that:

> The effective teacher will get the kids to learn the subject matter because it is interesting and it makes sense to them. Then they don't just memorize it but they will understand it.

Cliff presented another way to get students interested in the subject matter to be learned. He referred to the effective teacher as:

> Someone who helps the kids learn by making it fun. You can put notes on the board for 40 minutes and they may pick something up. If you make it fun, they are going to learn more. They are going to learn more when they are having a good time.

Four of the teachers interviewed felt that respect between student and teacher was important. This was expressed as respect for the student and respect from the student. Hal described this when he said "an effective teacher first of all builds up a respect and shows some care and concern for the student." He added that for "most students, their most memorable teachers are the teachers that took time to show some care or concern that the student was growing."

With regard to respect, Gwen referred to:

> Having the students' respect so that they feel comfortable coming to you and asking their questions or for help. They are not intimidated, but they also know where your limit is and where fun stops and serious work begins.

Eleanor also talked of this sense of knowing the limits in her class:

> My students would be absolutely sure at all times, I think, that there was a sense of direction and that there were lines over which they should not cross, but we don't have to talk about them much. I think you have to have a certain presence that says we are here to learn.

This seems to align with what Ann was saying about effective teachers, that in their presence "the students become orderly in their demeanor."

When asked to give her perception of effective teaching, Gwen answered jokingly, or perhaps not so jokingly, "being able to handle stress." Later in our talk she stated that she felt the most important part was:

> Being able to find a balance and getting everything done, the marking, keeping up, improving professional development, not teaching the same lesson 10 times for 10 years, but being able to keep up with the current practices and literature.

She referred to this as being able to "cope with all the stresses" so it seems apparent that, for her, stress is a defining factor in teaching.

Other qualities mentioned as being characteristic of effective teachers were: "caring, empathetic, fairly tough, honest, organized, sense of humor, flexible, a model of integrity and self discipline, secure, and, at a staff level, a contributor." Does this mean that all effective teachers have the same qualities and use the same strategies in dealing with students? Eleanor tended to think not:

> I think effective teachers are usually fairly idiosyncratic. I don't think there is a generic effective teacher. The best teachers I have ever known have been quite different than one another in

personality and in methodology, but what is common to them was their goals.

Effective teaching appears to have several similar characteristics, however, the methods used to be effective seem to vary according to each teacher's personal teaching style. There appeared to be general agreement as to the objectives or goals of effective teaching, that being to get content across to students, but the actual process varied. To these teachers, teaching involved making things interesting to the learner and making sense of things to the learner, while at the same time maintaining an atmosphere of concern, respect and fun, a sense of passion, and a sense of direction.

Gwen enlarged the definition of effective teaching to include more than the teaching act itself. She included professional development, keeping up, marking, and planning. The teachers themselves recognize that many characteristics are important as is the ambience.

## Professional Development and Growth

Even though the categories of Professional Development and Growth both involve the betterment of the teacher in some manner, and there is an overlap in some of the respondents' comments, examination of the responses in these categories suggests a distinguishable difference between the categories. Generally speaking, Professional Development was thought of as having to do with workshops, conferences, courses, or educational readings to improve the teacher's knowledge and practice in the classroom. The notion of Growth was viewed as being somewhat different in that it was related more to getting better at teaching through experiences at teaching or in some way being involved with other

teachers. With this in mind, the categories of Professional Development and Growth are discussed separately.

**Professional Development**

The value attached to formal methods of Professional Development, such as workshops, conferences, or Pro. D. days varied greatly among the eight teachers interviewed in this study. Opinions with regard to these formally organized activities ranged from "extremely worthwhile" to "totally useless."

Looking at Professional Development as of benefit to him, Hal viewed "professional development as a chance to grow in areas that you might be weak in or areas that you think will help you in the classroom with the kids." Doug supported this notion of professional development as being something he can use in the class:

> I went to a Special Education conference this fall and I learned a lot about new trends in integration. That's professional development for me. Anything that I'm working on with my students, if I can get more knowledge about that, I consider that development. I've also taken courses in media because I teach media to my students. I feel it is valuable to them. Taking university courses about new trends in Education is professional development.

Cliff, one of the respondents who was currently enrolled in courses, also felt that taking courses was professional development. He stated: "I was getting stagnant. I needed a major change in my life and this has shown me great new ideas."

Betty reiterated the value of attending conferences and workshops which have helped her in setting up the Behavioral Management program in her school. She also places a great value on reading educational material. She stated, "I've built up quite a library of books and magazines and articles that have crossed my desk." However Betty

found that it was not easy to "find enough time to spend on the reading and try to get all the work done that you have to do."

A slightly different view of professional development was held by Gwen. She has been supported by her District office and school administration in establishing computer networking capabilities for her school. These will be used in classes for the benefit of students, but she viewed the experience as being of value to her also. She stated that "for me multi-media is a real area of interest this year" and to this end, she has been willing to invest much of her own time and money towards the necessary courses.

For Gwen, professional development has also been a means of clarifying and strengthening her views about certain aspects of education. She stated that:

> I really found that going back to University last summer helped me because I was able to work on such things as the Health curriculum. I had very strong views on it but I really didn't know if my ideas or views were supported. After doing research on it, now I know what I thought and I know more why I thought it. I really found it helped.

There were, however, teachers interviewed that felt equally distressed with the professional development available to them in their districts. These teachers expressed frustration with the content of the formal professional development activities, as well as with their school districts' lack of commitment to professional development. Cliff expressed his dissatisfaction thus:

> Inservice is totally useless unless it has to do with a specific function such as teaching you how to use the Word Perfect or teaching you how to use a marks program on a computer. Inservice for that is great, but a one day PD day at the school where they come in and talk to you about a variety of topics is pretty useless in my books. I have been teaching for five years and we have never had a PD day where we stayed in the school and it was beneficial to me. The way I judge it to be beneficial is I simply say "would I rather be at my desk,

marking all those papers, or would I rather be here?" If I'd rather be at my desk, it's not useful.

Other participants of the study expressed similar concern with regard to Professional Development Days that they have attended. Ann confided that "I am always trying to improve but going to a workshop doesn't do a thing for me." She felt that they "have nothing in the way of Professional Development for High School teachers" in their district due to a lack of personnel and a lack of money for inservicing.

Eleanor, a teacher of many years, expressed here concern by admitting:

> I leave most workshops saying "so what do I do on Monday" or "that's really nice if this and this and this . . ." I think there has only been one workshop where I have been able to actually go back and apply what was shown to us. It was a teacher in Calgary who simply showed how she got students to move from understanding images to understanding the concept of metaphor. What she did was so clever that I still use it.

Eleanor maintained that more time is needed to interact with colleagues about things that do work in the classroom. She stated that:

> I've learned from colleagues, not from any convention session I've gone to, not from any conference I've gone to, and certainly not from these formally organized PD days where we mainly hear people talk in jargon. I think the things that really work in education are fairly modest things, they're not things that will get you on the convention circuit. They are little humble things.

There seems to be much support from the other teachers interviewed with regard to Eleanor's feelings that interaction with colleagues is a valuable form of professional development. Fred talked of a conference he had attended that year where one of the sessions "was just a chance to sit down and talk to your peers." He felt that this was one of the best sessions of the conference; in his words, "It was super. It was a real key thing for me."

Eleanor felt that professional development at the High School level should be done by people that are teachers or others working in the classroom. These people, in her opinion, have much valuable information and experience to share with other teachers. She insisted:

> I think you have to have people who are actually in the classroom who know what they are talking about and who are having the problems that other teachers are having.

Hal also touted the notion that talking with colleagues is a valuable form of professional development. He felt that through these discussions teachers can gain information about and interest in other more formal means of improving. In the earlier years of his career, he felt that it was through peer discussions that he was encouraged to become involved in other groups such as the Science Council and the Social Studies Council. Hal stated that he saw discussion as professional development because it might lead to other things.

When we talked about whether time was made available to teachers in his district for the purpose of simply interacting and sharing, Hal relayed that it was not. With regard to this interaction time, Hal described his view: "I think the argument from the senior administration is that that's not really professional development."

Another important aspect of professional development was the notion of "getting away" expressed by Cliff. For him, the idea of having a break from the classroom was every bit as important for his development as was the information gained at any workshop. He shared his feelings of a three day conference attended last year:

> You just get away for three days and you get a break and in all honesty, PD in getting away is just as good for getting you a break as it is for getting you knowledge.

Three of the teachers interviewed shed another light on the value of organized professional development. Their comments seem to suggest that the stage of a teacher's career has much to do with the importance teachers see in conferences and workshops.

Fred, a first year teacher, spoke very favorably about a two day conference he attended this year. This conference was specifically for beginning teachers, offering suggestions that they could use in their classrooms. Fred stated that "one of the best things I did was attend the first year teachers conference they have here for central Alberta teachers. They had a workshop on setting up a marks system and my marks have been so much easier to do since then."

Another important aspect of this conference for Fred was the help it gave him to tackle the "first year teacher blues." He talked of the frustration and anxiety he was experiencing as a first year teacher and how the conference helped him through these feelings. Fred commented:

> They were saying relax, take time for yourself, and I relaxed that weekend. I came back and I felt so much better. I was energetic, I wasn't frustrated in any way, I was ready to go.

Other teachers interviewed agreed with the importance of conferences and workshops for beginning teachers, even if they felt organized professional development had limited value to them as experienced teachers. Although Eleanor was skeptical of professional development, as it is presently done, for her, she saw a place for it with new teachers. She felt that "they need to know what the methodology alternatives are obviously and beginning teachers perhaps need the workshops which show them other alternatives."

Hal shared his feelings regarding conferences, stating that "when I was a little younger, to me they seemed to be refreshing." He felt that his view of professional development has changed with time:

> I think teachers, and myself in some cases, view professional development as being redundant. I know a lot of school staff, particularly my school staff, for PD days, want time to just sit down and plan.

The teachers interviewed had varying opinions on the methods of professional development that worked and the value professional development held for them. Some gained much from organized workshops while others placed more value on informal methods of learning from colleagues. There appears to be a common belief that professional development is beneficial to teachers early in their careers.

**Growth**

Judging from the responses given by the eight people interviewed in this study, growth as a teacher has occurred in many ways for these individuals. Some of the respondents were able to articulate quite clearly and with certainty how they had grown as teachers, while others knew they were getting better at teaching, but were not as sure what was causing the improvement.

Fred, the first year teacher who took part in the study, talked of growth in terms of changing attitudes brought on by actually being in the classroom, as opposed to theoretical knowledge from his university training. He shared these feelings:

> I really find that my views have changed; they're more realistic views now. I don't want to sound cynical or pessimistic, but it's certainly scaled down a lot now that I've been out here seeing exactly what teachers can accomplish.

This year has presented quite a challenge for Fred, as it did for so many other beginning teachers. As far as growth, he shared two

opinions, the first being that of "just getting through right now." He comments:

> This year is a real survival stage. I feel like I'm just doing the basics. I'm doing so much less than I could be doing. I feel like I'm pulling rabbits out of my hat every day.

Fred also recognizes the fact that there has been growth in his teaching this year. He stated, "I think I am a little more efficient and better now. I'm into a mode where I'm doing the things that are sound for my students."

Other teachers interviewed for the study relayed their feelings about their teaching ability now as compared to when they started. Most feel they are definitely better teachers now, for a variety of reasons, but feelings of plateauing were also expressed. The feelings of growth and improved teaching appear to have arisen from increased awareness and feelings of accomplishment throughout the teachers' careers.

Several of the respondents spoke of class discipline as being a "hurdle" to get over in their early years. Cliff expressed this, saying, "I didn't teach my first year, I disciplined and I did it very poorly." He no longer feels this is the case and he added "I think the kids enjoy my classes more and get more out of my classes now."

Doug echoed these feelings when he talked of his experiences with his first class. He stated:

> When I started, I was really swamped and it took me a few years to get to the point where I was enjoying it. I started with a very difficult class of students that specialized in creating difficult situations for teachers. They had run off the previous teacher. Once I got over that hurdle, it just got better and better as the years went by, to the point where now I really enjoy teaching.

Three teachers interviewed talked of how their expectations had changed over the years. As Fred expressed earlier, these teachers also

felt that it took time to develop realistic expectations. Betty felt that she had to alter her expectations, later expecting more of the students than when she started: "I think even in the past five years or so my expectations of what kids are capable of doing have changed, where I now expect them to do more."

Eleanor felt that she has grown to the point where now she teaches very differently from earlier in her career.

> I am a totally different teacher now than I was even fifteen years ago. I mean I thought what I was doing was great but I don't think the students learned very much. I'm a much better teacher now. I know how hard teaching is, I didn't know that in the beginning. I mainly thought about "do I have a lesson plan for tomorrow, any lesson plan?" It doesn't matter whether it's leading anywhere, just how you fill up the hour. Now I have so much to do that I mainly decide what to leave out.

Ann also expressed a feeling of "confidence in the methods [she] uses for any particular thing." This confidence took many years and much trial and error to develop. Ann shared:

> Right now, I know what it is I am trying to get kids to do. Before I was kind of experimenting. When I first started teaching, I had no idea how to tell how one kid was better at his work than another. I could tell what was better writing but I had no way of explaining to the kids what was better or how they could fix it. I am much better at that now.

All teachers interviewed talked of there definitely having been growth and improvement in their teaching. How has this growth come about? Experience seems to be one of the main contributors, but something more appeared to be evident as well. Growth did not happen by accident nor by just putting in time. One concept mentioned by several respondents was self evaluation in some form.

Cliff talked about "reflecting on lessons" taught to get a sense of whether the students understood the concepts presented. If he felt they

did not understand something, he tried presenting it in a different way the next day. Fred also discussed the use of reflecting on a lesson. He stated that one thing he does is "sit down and think 'okay, how did this go, how did this work?'"

The notion of evaluations from students was also discussed. Hal felt that student input was valuable to him in determining if he was doing things right. Fred said "I always ask the kids what is going right, what is going wrong." He felt that sometimes he may not see if things are going along well or not.

Not all teachers were teaching in their area of university training . Eleanor felt that this has contributed to some of her growth as an English teacher. She expressed this by stating:

> I think my own struggles to understand how to teach English have helped me be a better teacher. Probably in the long run it has been an advantage because I've had to learn by doing it and I'm really sensitive to what kids are going through for that reason. I've made every mistake in the book; I've tried nearly every method in the book and I now have a strong conviction about what I do. I mean I know what I am doing and why I am doing it.

This expression of a "trial and error" method of becoming a better teacher was also expressed by others. Betty referred to this by saying:

> I think I've learned a lot from mistakes, and I guess that has humbled me somewhat. I started out years ago thinking I knew it all and every year I realize that I don't and there is still a lot to learn. I think over the years those experiences have helped to make me better.

Growth as a teacher does not happen to all people in the same way nor at the same time in their career. For some teachers, such as Ann, it took many years to develop the philosophy she now has. She noted:

> It has something to do with growing into the content of your subject area, with your methodology of teaching, with an overall development of an understanding of what education is for kids. That philosophy that you think you have when you come out of

> university is not developed, you develop it as you go along. It takes a person awhile to see what is necessary and what the part of the teacher is in all of this.

Ann went on to say that she "thinks people teach what they are."

Ann also shared that for her, growth happened because she has "always been a person who has wanted to do better as a teacher." Through her self awareness, she has put much effort into improving her effectiveness in the classroom. She insisted that:

> I was bound and determined that I wasn't going to be a lousy teacher. I was always alert to how others did things. I would ask them what they did and observe them if I could.

Another trait that Ann, as well as Betty, felt has helped them be better teachers is their desire to understand thoroughly the topic they are teaching. If they see a need for more information to help them with their teaching, they do whatever is necessary to gain that knowledge. Ann admitted:

> Whenever I teach something I always want to know everything there is about that something and then I have to think about my kids and translate what I know into what I think they can best and most easily and most efficiently understand.

Along the same theme, Betty stated:

> Things that come along that I just don't feel I know enough about or need to find out more to make a good decision or if I'm having trouble with things, I'll order books and sit down and attack it that way.

A theme expressed by most of the respondents was about the importance of observing others teach. Doug stated "I just love to watch the other [special education] teacher and the way he interacts with the students. I pick up tips from him." Gwen added that "I think it would be really good for me to be able to see and interact with teachers. When I

have a student teacher, I find I benefit as much as the student teacher does."

Cliff expressed a different side of observing other teachers at work. He stated "I think a big thing for me is that a couple of teachers at the school have helped show me what not to become, or what not to do."

Is growth always healthy and is growth always happening? These thoughts come to mind when considering comments made by some of the respondents.

Is growth always healthy? Betty stated that "sometimes I feel like I never finish something. I think maybe I move around a little too much, but these opportunities come up and I just kind of want to go after them." Gwen commented, "I just keep taking on more and more because it all sounds so interesting and because I like what I am doing. I think 'Oh, that'd be fun. Why don't I do that.'" Both these teachers also expressed concerns about being too busy.

Is growth always happening? While some of the teachers interviewed referred to their teaching being better at certain points in their career and at certain schools, Hal was more explicit in his comment. He stated, "I think there have been hills and valleys. I think I am at a plateau right now. My growth has leveled off."

All the teachers interviewed felt they were better teachers now due to their experiences. There has been growth in their abilities and much of this growth could be attributed to self interest and personal efforts to improve their teaching. Growth was felt to be very individualistic and had occurred in different ways and at different rates for the participants.

## How Principals Facilitate the Work of Teachers

All the teachers interviewed thought that principals can greatly affect the work of teachers in a positive or negative fashion. Responses with regard to this probably had the greatest diversity of any aspect of this study. It seems that all areas of education were discussed, and in one manner or another, related back to the principal. Upon examination of the responses, there appears to be three main categories emerging as to how the principal can influence teachers. These are with regard to providing resources to teachers, interactions with and between staff members, and working with teachers individually.

### Providing Resources to Teachers

Resources are commonly viewed as being concrete items that can be used for a specific purpose. Teachers interviewed talked of this type of resource, but several of the respondents discussed a more intangible resource that principals could supply them with: time.

#### Time

This resource, time, was often mentioned as being in short supply, and shrinking steadily. The teachers interviewed seemed aware of the difficulty the principals faced in trying to provide them with preparation time or sharing time in a shrinking economic environment, but most felt that it was essential and possible. Ann commented that:

> even in the hardest of times some money should be put aside for helping to renew teachers and I would say that it ought to be put into insuring that teachers get together to talk about content, talk about methods, or talk about the environment they are creating for kids.

The notion of time to talk to colleagues as being important was also expressed by Eleanor in her comment, referring back to wealthier times in education, "those were the days when we had a little more time. Classes were smaller and there just seemed to be time to talk to each other."

Hal supported this need for time by saying that teachers in his school want time "to sit down with colleagues and plan something for the kids or their programs." He referred to time being essential if a school is to improve or change. Of one school he taught in, he said, "I could see some of the good things of what we were doing in terms of change, but no matter how good these are, unless you have time to carry them out, it all looses meaning."

Eleanor spoke of her desire to share her years of experience and knowledge with fellow teachers. She believed that "the majority of teachers are competent, interested, and conscientious, and what they need is time; to read a book, to talk to colleagues, to plan adequately." Her desire to work with other teachers in the district was accepted, although on her own time, with no remuneration. She stated of her district that "they saw the value in it and they did allow for it and that has been the single most significant thing for me. This has helped me and helped my colleagues as well. I write things they can actually use with kids."

When asked about the personal cost to her of working with other teachers, Eleanor admitted she took a big cut in salary to do this, but still feels it was worth it. She commented: "I don't think money motivates teachers. Time is the only thing. I mean not time so you can put your feet up, but rather time so you can do [your job]." In a later

phone contact with her, she expressed her feelings of sadness to see the end of the school year approaching.

Three of the teachers interviewed talked of the principal being able to control the timetable in a manner which could greatly affect their teaching. Fred, a first year teacher with a wide variety of subjects to teach, has only one preparation period per week. This was of concern to him.

Doug was teaching with no preparation time at all. To compensate for this, the principal had arranged the following:

> Right now I don't have to do supervision. I've lost my prep time so they said as a little reward for not having any prep time, I wouldn't have to do any supervision. But the supervision I was doing before wasn't much, only one noon hour a week for half an hour.

Gwen expressed concern at how the time table was set up and her lack of time to do the jobs that were expected of her.

> Being a team leader, I should have an extra prep for that, but because I already had an extra prep for being the department head, they didn't give it to me. I had to teach so much so it was easier for me just not to get an extra prep, so now I have to do both jobs with the same prep time I had last year.

Another aspect of time that was mentioned had to do with the amount of time wasted with bureaucracy. Frustration was expressed by three teachers with the filling out of forms that seemed to be taking up more of their time yearly. Doug summed it up with his statement, "my time is very valuable. I'm a pretty well paid teacher and my time is too valuable to be wasted doing paper work like that."

**Doing For Teachers**

Continuing with the idea of the principal being a resource for teachers, three teachers interviewed talked of the principal being able to do things for them.

Gwen talked of the support and help she got when she was getting the school involved in the School Net and working with the computers. She said "[the principal] really kept up on it and asked me often 'what can I do to help, what is my job here?'"

Gwen also referred to her principal as being ever ready to help the teachers in any way. She said the principal was more than willing to cover a class for her if she wanted to do something. She stated, "if I wanted too take a group of kids to the library to work on the computer, he would make the time to cover the rest of the class for you."

Cliff shared his principal's willingness to "cover a class" if he wanted to observe a colleague. He felt it had to be for a specific purpose, but knew the principal would be there to help him.

Ann introduced the idea of "servant leadership" being essential in the schools. She felt:

> the teachers are the ones that are in there trying to do things. If they need help, whether it be phone calls home that they don't have time to make, or some other help, they should be able to rely on the principal. So it is providing resources people need.

**Information Source**

Another way the respondents stated that principals could help them was to be a source of information. Gwen talked of the administration in her school not always being able to help her, but being very willing to find others in the district who could. She stated, when talking of this, that "if it wasn't something that they could do, they would put me in touch with somebody who could."

Along the same lines, Betty saw the administration as being important in keeping her informed. She said, "things come into the office that you never see in the classroom. If the principal had an article that I

could use he would come and share it with me, or he would tell me of conferences that looked good."

**Supplier of Items**

There was also an expression of the need for principals to supply the resources or money necessary to ensure the success of a program that is seen as a priority by the school. Hal noted, "the principal, the ultimate controller of the money, can support you or that program by providing the funds needed there."

Resources seem to fall into four main categories; time to do their work, help from the principal, information pertinent to their teaching, and 'things' needed by teachers. Interestingly enough, the least mentioned by all respondents in the study was the need of concrete items, and the most talked about was the need for time to collaborate with colleagues.

## Interaction With the Staff as a Whole

This section of how principals facilitate the work of teachers explores the participants' responses which suggest the principal working with the staff as a group. The principal's role in the school in terms of encouraging collegiality and collaboration, enhancing effective communication, working to develop a healthy school climate and involvement in school activities will be described.

**Encouraging Staff Collegiality**

One notion of how teachers can become better and provide better learning for their students was expressed repeatedly throughout the interviews by all respondents; the idea of working together and helping each other. How this is done will be discussed in more detail in the next

section of this thesis. This section is focused on how the teachers felt the principals could best facilitate collegial relationships among teachers.

When we are talking about teaching staff working together, it seems only natural that setting a good example of this would be foremost in the minds of the administration team. Cliff shared his feelings of what he thought was "one-upmanship" going on between his principal and vice-principal. He felt this created bad feelings within the school.

Leadership was seen as important to all the respondents in terms of modeling appropriate behaviors, working with others, or being open to ideas from teacher colleagues. Hal noted, when asked what has helped him with his teaching, that it was the leadership:

> I think for me it was the leadership in the school, as well as the colleagues, just like a kid in a classroom remembers a certain teacher for caring and nurturing, or pushing you to do something.

Similar feelings were expressed by Ann when she talked of a principal she had worked for:

> One of the principals when I was at my junior high school became a very good friend. He helped me tremendously just by modeling for me ways to be and ways to think and what education was. I tremendously respected this man.

Betty felt that it was important that the principal be willing to work with the teachers and be ready to accept the teachers' help and suggestions when warranted. She stated:

> I think the administrator should be somebody who is open to different ideas. Not a dictatorial administrator, but one that works together with the school, and yet not somebody that is going to mess with every concern that somebody has.

By this last comment she appeared to mean a person that was aware of the teachers' concerns, but not one to make changes without first considering the consequences to the school and others.

How can principals encourage collegiality in the schools? Hal felt that "they can set up schedules and set up situations with coaching from other staff members that would lead to success." He thought this could be done by principals covering all or part of a teacher's class to allow that teacher to observe or coach another staff member.

Ann supported this concept and felt that principals could "provide some 'sub' time to get teachers into each other's rooms." She felt quite strongly that this was possible, necessary in hard economic times, and would not cost the schools much money.

> You could do it under the auspices of teachers evaluating teachers. You could make it your evaluation policy and you could ask them to decide what kinds of things they think make a good English teacher, get them talking about certain things. I think teachers from different jurisdictions or schools ought to be able to do a little trading back and forth, especially when something new comes up in education such as these tremendous cutbacks. Teachers could have meetings with teachers from other schools saying "how do you cope with this?" For example, how many kids do you have in your class, are you marking as many papers, if you are not, what are you doing about writing, if you keep those response journals, what do you have kids do in them, and so on. That doesn't need to cost much money, maybe some coffee and donut money.

Another method mentioned for getting teachers to work together was that of a team approach in schools which would require minimal extra money and could be set up by the principal. Gwen spoke of her experience with this in her school:

> I really like the team concept that we have here. I am much more aware of what the other curriculums are, aware of how my program may tie into the others. We don't integrate so much but if I am doing an environment unit in Science and they are taking environmental issues in Language Arts, we will try to tie it together.

Along the same lines is the notion of team teaching discussed by Doug:

> I think that team teaching would be an excellent exercise. We hear about really good teachers but you never see them in action. How do I get a chance to see the brilliant Math teacher down the hall?

He felt that team teaching could be set up in some areas with minimal cost because the class sizes could be somewhat larger to allow for this.

One teacher interviewed "stepped down as department head" because she was not interested in the administrative function. Eleanor convinced her principal to allow her to split the position with a fellow teacher who was interested in administration so she could continue to work with teachers, helping them in the classroom.

**Effective Communication**

Clear, open, honest communication was expressed as a major element for success by all the teachers who participated in this study. During the discussions, several different aspects of communication were presented. Teachers felt that two way communication with the principal was essential, as well as communication with colleagues, students, and parents. A need to work together towards some common goals and expectations was also valued, but not always present.

How important is good communication? Ann felt it was essential:

> Talking about what you are doing is totally necessary. Talking about what is going on in your school and in your classroom and what it is that you are going to teach.

Doug added "I believe in communication. The more communication I get with somebody the better, so if the principal can communicate with me a lot, that is going to help." Fred felt that communication was very important and was done well at his present school.

Cliff expressed the opinion that socializing is a major part of good communication between the principal and the staff. He contends:

> It would go a long way toward bridging the gap. It would go a long way in saying "look this is my position, that's your position. This is me as a person and I'm not mad at you and it's not that I don't like you. It's just that this is the decision that I've made and I'm sorry but this has to get carried out, now let's go have some fun and forget about it"

Ann also talked of being open and friendly as helping to create a positive atmosphere in the school, but added that this is not always easy for the principal, because:

> Friendliness helps, but my principal is a shy man. He will talk and tease people, but it is something he has deliberately learned how to do because he is actually a shy person.

**Being Listened To**. Several of the teachers interviewed expressed their desire to be able to talk to their principals freely about school matters. This desire for input was important to them, and some of the teachers felt that their principals were very approachable, open, and ready to listen. Ann expressed this by saying "even though we disagree on certain things, he allows disagreement because he respects what you do."

Betty reiterated these feelings in her comment:

> The doors are always open and I think that is important. You feel like you could come in and express your concerns or questions. I think it is important that there is an openness to be able to not agree with everything.

Gwen also saw it as desirable that the principal be a "good listener." In her school, she said that "if I do have a concern then I feel like I can tell [the administration] and they will listen to my viewpoint." However, this is not always going to yield results. Gwen went on to say that "nothing would change, chances are, but they would definitely try to explain their philosophy or their reasons."

Criticism and input into school matters were not always well received by the principals of some teachers. Eleanor felt this was unfortunate as teachers have much to offer in the way of valuable ideas.

> I think criticism is the most valuable thing that I give and I think there is not enough debate in schools about educational issues. I don't think there is enough respect for dissent in schools. I am a great believer of dissent and debate and the dialectic process, the clash of ideas. In teaching the teachers are often as knowledgeable or more knowledgeable, certainly more knowledgeable in the subject areas, than the administration and there is far too much top-down telling and not enough bottom-up listening.

In discussing communication with Cliff, I asked if the principal in his school was open to input and his reply was a quick "No, none." He went on to talk about his being at university this year and possibly gaining more valuable ideas to contribute. Cliff expressed this by stating, "I believe that when I go back I will have more ideas to contribute that are positive and maybe then he will listen."

**Feedback**. Another often talked about aspect of communication that emerged from the interviews was that of getting feedback from the principals. This feedback was usually seen as being helpful but, at other times, somewhat harmful to teachers.

Fred, being new to teaching, felt the need for feedback from the principal to gauge his performance in the classroom. He was comfortable with the help he was getting. When Fred asked his principal if he was seeing the things he should be seeing, the principal reassured him by letting him know that if there were any concerns, he would talk to him, but otherwise, "don't worry."

Cliff, also, was very comfortable in the way his principal let him know if there was a concern. He stated:

> If I am fooling around with my students, he'll tap my shoulder and his biggest line is "have you got a minute?" and as soon as you hear that you know there is something wrong. But even then, he will sit down with you in his office and he will talk to you about what you did.

Keeping you informed of pertinent information was also valued by the teachers. Gwen felt pleased that her principal "keeps you well informed with such things as all the budget cuts going on and what is going to happen to us, and the middle school changes that are happening." She said it makes things "not so scary" if they know what is happening.

Feelings about poor methods of feedback were also expressed. Cliff was quite displeased with the manner of communication of the vice-principal in his school. He commented:

> He is a very negative person and has a hard time giving positive feedback or compliments. It always seems to be negative. What you are doing wrong rather than, thanks for doing this right.

Hal also warned that "there has to be a balance." He spoke of a principal that:

> Continually handed out articles, poems, professional papers that, for example where a kid has written a poem before he has committed suicide because a teacher did this to him in the classroom today. [The principal] used to hand out these to show that teachers are prejudiced against certain groups, and after awhile, if you inundate your staff with that sort of information, what are you feeding them? They may be a great staff but you as an advocate for kids are telling them that maybe they are not doing a good job.

He felt this can, and did in this school, cause teachers to question themselves too much. Hal talked of the importance of discussing this sort of material and also the need to focus on the good the teachers are doing as well.

**Communication Methods**. How communication happened in the school was also a matter of concern to the teachers interviewed. One

such area involved the value of staff meetings. When Doug talked of the staff meetings in his school, he felt there could be a better way to communicate that information to teachers. He stated that "there is a little bit of discussion and debate that goes on but not very much that has relevance to teaching. It's mostly paper work."

These feelings were echoed by Cliff. His comments were:

> We may as well have been handed a memo in our boxes instead of having a staff meeting. He tells you everything. He takes up two hours on things that could be typed out.

The use of a memo was exactly what happened in the school where Ted taught. He stated that:

> The principal puts out an information update for Mondays that talks about period changes, student transfers, upcoming events, or whatever. That is extremely helpful.

Gwen also talked of the weekly bulletin in her school as being valuable.

Eleanor, too, was not very happy about the staff meetings in her school. She felt they were "largely passing on information."

> We never have motions, we never make decisions. I don't really think we ever discuss educational issues, not in any meaningful way. At one of our budget meetings we did have a straw vote in which all but three people voted one way, but [the decision] went the other way because the principal had a bigger vision.

Gwen spoke of the need for better communication in her previous school because "there never seemed to be the full communication of good ideas somewhere else in the school."

**With Students and Parents**. Another area of communication that emerged often throughout the interviews was that of teachers communicating with the students and parents. For some teachers, it was something they valued and worked hard at on their own.

Eleanor shared that "I talk to my students just about as I would talk to my colleagues and this has made a tremendous difference." Hal also expressed his belief of talking openly with his students. He said "I find that in a lot of cases the students are very appreciative at the time if they know the situation."

In some schools, procedures have been established to ensure communication will happen between the school and the students and parents. Cliff talked of the documentation that is required in his school to ensure that the parents are accurately informed of any discipline problems with their child.

Gwen commented on the many expectations placed on teachers for communicating positive and negative happenings with the parents and students from her school. Phone calls are expected and must be logged, postcards are made available to teachers to pass on compliments, homerooms are set up with the same teacher for three years to allow better relationships to grow, teams of teachers are established to track students in their subjects in an attempt to ensure successful completion of all subjects, and contracts of common expectations for students are signed by the students and parents.

**The School Vision**. How the school's vision was devised and communicated to the staff was often commented on by the respondents, mostly unfavorably so. It seemed that the teachers were not opposed to working together to establish a mission statement for their schools, but some felt their ideas were neither valued nor respected.

Betty thought that the process of working together to develop a school mission statement was a lengthy process but "the process is valuable."

> I think there has to be some kind of focus as to where we are going. You can't make decisions about what programs you are going to run or who is going to teach what or what your rules will be or what do you expect from parents involved if you don't have an idea of where you are going.

Many others, however, felt misled or that their time was being wasted on a formality or exercise with a forgone conclusion. Eleanor stated:

> We pretended the staff had input but essentially it was written and decided by the administration. It is one of those motherhood statements that could mean anything and therefore doesn't really send a clear direction.

Ann commented:

> One of the things that I have noticed is that regardless of the statements of the vision, it is the true human vision of the principal that eventually determines everything in the school.

Gwen echoed:

> We were given some key words that had to be put into one sentence, so it was all fairly directed. Our administration really strives to make it seem like it's a group effort, but when push comes to shove, it will be what they want. If you don't buy into their philosophy and if you don't work hard, you won't be there.

In Cliff's school there was not even the pretense of having input into the mission statement. He said, "the staff had no input at all. We were told, 'Here is the mission statement, put it up on your classroom wall.' Our mission statement means nothing to us."

Others talked of an attempt made in their schools to communicate and work towards common goals, but to no real success. Doug said, "there were areas we were going to work on as a staff to improve the school. Some goals, but they usually fizzle out anyway." Hal commented that "the goals were kept so general that as an educator in the school, you would not deny that vision."

**Standards and Expectations**. The expectations of the principal must be communicated clearly to the teachers of the school and vice versa. As well, these same expectations must be communicated clearly to the students. Many of the teachers interviewed referred to the need for consistency and support from the principal in dealing with discipline matters and how the administration can greatly influence the climate of the school by how these matters are handled.

In Gwen's school, the principal had some definite, clear expectations of the teachers and she felt that these were clearly communicated. She stated:

> The philosophy is very, very clear. We've had staff meetings and been told that if you don't agree with the philosophy, look for a transfer and it is said point blank like that. You have to be involved in extra-curricular. They expect you to do yearly plans and do exactly what you said you were going to do. There is a real focus on becoming better.

Other teachers echoed the same feelings of expectations being communicated to them in their schools, but most principals were not quite as blunt. Fred stated that he "sat down with the administration and was informed of the expectations, what [they] were trying to achieve here." Cliff said his principal "was supportive, but he also demands a lot of his teachers."

Eleanor commented that she felt the principal had a right and even a duty to place some demands on teachers. She stated:

> I think there have to be some rules in a school. I think you have to expect of teachers the same things you expect of students. They have the right to say to a teacher "look, you can't come to class late every day."

Ann shared these feelings saying that two principals she worked for knew enough to set some rules. "You people will set a good example for students" he told the staff.

Doug was concerned about how far the administration should be able to go in pushing their expectations on everyone. He spoke of a new administration who came in and "started putting more and more pressure on to do things the way they wanted them done."

Four of the teachers interviewed talked of how the principals' expectations of the students, if clearly and consistently applied, greatly enhance their effectiveness. Gwen mentioned how the principal in her school sets "a tone of respect". She stated:

> I know my rules and expectations are expectations throughout the school and I know if there is [a problem] and if I deal with it, then everyone else in the hall is dealing with it. It is very consistent.

Fred had similar feelings of the principal in his school having "very high expectations and setting a good tone."

Ann spoke of how a principal from her early teaching days helped her evaluate and formulate her own expectations:

> One time the principal of the school came in and saw some boys with their legs up on the backs of the desk in front of them and he whacked those legs, and I thought he was some sort of an idiot. This started me thinking about why he didn't want this kind of behavior so I started paying attention to this sort of thing. These are little ways that indicate that a kid is not engaged in what he is doing. There is something about not having sloppy form, you see it in sports, dancing and in everything, so there is something about not having sloppy form even in students. We don't get to whack them anymore but they don't get to be slovenly in my class.

There was great concern expressed by the teachers that once expectations were in place, they be dealt with consistently by teachers and administration.

Betty stated:

> The expectations have to be really clear and they have to be dealt with consistently. It is very difficult to enforce rules in the classroom, and have expectations if you know that when you take that kid down to the office you are not going to find the same answers there.

Ann shared these feelings, adding:

> The way to burn out teachers is to have them become totally disillusioned by saying one thing and acting a different way, always making it so they are spinning their wheels, if it is supposed to be one way but it is really another. That frustrates teachers. Any time contradictions that affect teaching are in place you are going to make things impossible for teachers.

The principal was often regarded as being the key to good communication in the schools these teachers worked in. Teachers expressed a belief that good communication started with that person and if encouraged, continued on between the staff, students, and parents. The need for there to be communication of the principals' expectations to both the students and staff was also expressed.

**Controlling the Environment**

The teachers interviewed discussed, in the last section, the need for the principal to communicate clear and consistent expectations to the staff and students. Further statements revealed that the teachers felt principals were a major factor in establishing a comfortable tone or climate in their school through their consistent enforcement of these expectations.

Hal talked of needing "clear values or parameters" so teachers know what their role in the school is. He stated:

> It is very difficult for a teacher to operate if the support isn't there from the principal in maintaining a good atmosphere in the school, conducive to learning. What happens is that most teachers will withdraw into their classrooms. They can only take care basically of what their jurisdiction around them is, within the classroom. They can go out and help in the hallways but you run into the dilemma of overstepping the bounds of what the atmosphere of the school is.

Hal went on to say that he felt "a lot of the overall tone of the school is set by the senior administrator in the school."

Ann supported this notion, adding that with the changes in education, "the principal and what [that person] sets as a tone in the school has become extremely important." She added that it helps teachers if the principal "creates an orderly, safe environment." She further commented on having female vice-principals in her school as helping to establish a "gentle school."

Eleanor shared her experience of once having a principal come into a school where she was teaching that "was a little bit off the rails." The principal came in "with a very clear idea of what he wanted" to help make the school a safe place for kids to be and to pursue academic excellence. Eleanor said she did not always agree with this person's methods, but that he did get the school back on track.

How do principals create this safe, orderly environment that the teachers refer to? Gwen shared that in her school the administration "really pushes respect and manners and if there is anything they find is a problem they deal with it immediately." She added that they help with discipline and attendance problems by supervising a study hall for the teachers. Gwen further mentioned the support she received if she did, on the rare occasion, need to send a student to the office.

Cliff echoed the need for support with student discipline as being very important to him. He commented "if I have to worry about whether or not a child is going to be disciplined properly because he's left my classroom and is now on the way to the office, then I'm not going to concentrate on my teaching."

Eleanor shared a description used by one of her vice-principals to describe his role. He felt that his job was to keep the school free of problems for the teachers so that they could carry on and do their job.

Not all teachers interviewed felt comfortable about sending their students to the office for discipline reasons. Doug confided:

> I don't have any problem with the rules and why they're there or the discipline policy and why it is there, but I get very nervous when I have, for example, a sullen student sent to the office. If I send him to the vice-principal or the principal, chances are the discipline he is going to receive is going to escalate to the point where it's far more than it should be based on the action the student did, so I tend to avoid administration in terms of discipline.

**Principal Involvement**

During the interviews, teachers expressed the desire to have the principal involved more, both in the school activities and with what the teachers were doing. Some teachers interviewed felt this was happening, but others thought that it was lacking and would like to see more of the principal.

Eleanor regarded this as an "administration that simply takes an interest in what you are doing." Betty felt she would like to see a principal that "puts in time to do things" and "an administration that works together with the school." Gwen had a high regard for the administrators in her school for:

> Being there, being role models. They are always in the school, they come to dances, they show up at things and take an interest in what you are doing. The number of hours they put in really helps because then you don't think you're doing it all for naught.

Cliff also appreciated the involvement of his principal.

> He comes and watches a volleyball game and when you are cleaning up or talking to your players afterwards he says "that was a good game. You are doing a good job." Being there and saying thanks instead of those formal letters.

Being involved in what was happening in the school was also valued by Doug. He noted, "we used to have assemblies and the principal would get up with the vice-principal and they would do skits." Doug also expressed his pleasure at having the administration in his classroom. "I love it when they come in my room and integrate themselves into Special Education."

This feeling was reiterated by other respondents as well. Gwen said:

> It's just nice to have them come in the room sometimes. It's enjoyable. Sometimes they will stop and talk, sometimes they will just look in the kids' books, sometimes they will participate in the conversation.

She felt that this really helped the students get to know the principal as other than an authority figure in the office.

Betty stated that what she would "like to have is for them to be visible and around, in the classrooms a lot, so the kids know who they are and they recognize what the kids are doing and their efforts."

There was also concern expressed that the principal be more directly involved in the educational work of the school. Gwen wanted to see the principal teaching one period per day: "I think it is essential that he isn't totally out of the classroom."

For Eleanor, the "interest in what goes on in the classroom has steadily diminished for administrators over time. I think principals need to get out of their office more and talk to teachers." She thought the problem was mostly due to the increased demands on the principal's time filling out forms and other paper work required by central office.

In discussing with the teachers how the principal could help them be more effective, teachers described many ways that involved working together as a staff. The teachers were very decided and explicit as to

what could be or is being done by the principals in their schools to help them.

## Working With Individual Teachers

Many of the comments offered by the respondents of this study suggested ways that their principals do or could help them on a more individual basis. Teachers talked of how their evaluations were being conducted and what value these had to them. Other responses fit into categories dealing with trust, which appears to lead to professionalism and autonomy in the classroom, and finally, how support from the principal helps teachers teach effectively.

### Evaluation of Teachers

Varying opinions of evaluation were expressed, ranging from it being very useful to it being completely useless. The reasons for evaluations and suggestions to change them were just as varied.

Gwen expressed her feelings from the experiences in her school. Of evaluations, she said:

> I would say it is to help us be better teachers. They always set aside time and discuss them with you. Some people would definitely say they are for hatchet reasons. My first year here there were some teachers who were forced to other schools, schools they wouldn't like. After that year, there was a real paranoia for teachers. A lot of people were afraid to say or do anything.

Eleanor felt there was no need for evaluation as it exists. She did not place any value in the evaluation process as it was now being carried out in her school. Two suggestions she made were listening more to students about the effectiveness of teachers and studying teachers who are successful. She also stated:

> I think teachers want to be good. I don't think evaluations, except for those who are lazy, do one bit of good. Our board requires that

> teachers be evaluated every year so it is an impossible task and it really doesn't have any effect whatsoever, as far as I can see, on classroom practice.

Doug is another that saw little value in the present format of evaluation in his school:

> It's completely useless. For an evaluation to be done "correctly", the teacher has to be notified in advance that he or she is going to be evaluated on a certain day and of course then the teacher gears their lesson for the day of the evaluation. The super lesson plan syndrome. What you get back in response is several inane comments about how wonderful your teaching was on that phony day, and they are useless.

Three of the teachers interviewed talked of an evaluation format that was, to them, quite useful, and similar in many ways. This consisted of a personal action plan that was devised with the principal at the beginning of the year. Teachers were asked to inform the principal of some things that they wish to improve upon throughout the year and how the principal could help. They also met later in the year to discuss progress towards their personal goals. Gwen talked of her school:

> We have to come up with something that we want to improve or work on in the year and submit it by the end of September. Then our administrator meets with us and asks us "how can we help, what do you want from us, what do you want me to watch for if I come in to observe you?" If they come across articles on what it is you are trying to improve upon then they will copy them for you.

Hal and Ann spoke favorably of similar systems at work in their schools.

Another notion of evaluation was expressed by Ann, consisting of teachers evaluating each other. Her idea for this arose from her experience as a department head who was required to evaluate teachers in her department. Of this she comments:

> As a department head doing evaluations on other teachers I have found it very interesting to see other people. My seeing them has developed me. Each teacher should be going around doing all these evaluations. You see what is good and that makes a teacher in turn think about their own teaching.

This notion was also mentioned by Cliff as being useful to him.

There were some good methods of evaluation happening, Hal felt, but often they did not get put into practice "because as schools we are trying to do so much, we get into crisis situations where the evaluation process goes out the window because [principals] are too busy putting out fires here and there."

**Trusting Teachers**

One of the more common feelings that was expressed by the teachers interviewed was that they wished to be allowed the autonomy to teach as they see best, that they are professionals and will do a good job, and that they should have to be held accountable to do what is best for their students. As Ann phrased it, "leaving teachers alone is sometimes one of the ways that principals can help teachers."

Some of the teachers interviewed were quite pleased with the relationship that existed between them and their principals. They felt that they were viewed as a professional with the skills to do their own work and the wisdom to contribute to the betterment of the school. Cliff commented:

> Our principal has a policy of hands off. Basically if you are doing your job, he is going to stay out of your way, he is going to stay out of your classroom, and he's going to give you what you want.

Feelings of having a principal recognize that you, as a teacher, have something to contribute to the school, were expressed by Ann when she stated her principal "encouraged me to do things, gave me all kinds of responsibilities to deal with in the department."

Gwen spoke positively of a principal who worked at the same level as she did and did not treat her as if he was the boss and she was doing things for him. She also shared a story of a teacher in her district who

was given a great deal of autonomy. She stated, "he is the only science teacher in his school and he can do whatever he pleases and he organizes it however he pleases. He likes doing his own thing and he is very, very good at it."

Betty related a healthy working relationship from a previous school where she taught. With regard to handling two special education students, "the principal would come to me and ask how to deal with them because he didn't know what he should do."

Eleanor saw this sort of cooperative re'ationship as being necessary in schools. She stated:

> I don't think [principals] can possibly be an expert in everything. In fact, they should have a little humility and realize that they have a lot of experts in their schools, very expert, and pay attention a little bit more.

Feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction were expressed by two teachers over different philosophies regarding the exact same issue, how they handled their program and the budget.

Betty was allowed the freedom to run her program as she saw fit. She talked of this trust:

> I guess maybe because I teach in special education I am able to do what I want. I've had more freedom and have been able to call the shots because none of the administration in any of the schools I've been in have been special education people. They've always been quite happy to let me do the things I felt were right. I had total control over the budget and whatever I felt I needed for materials, as long as it was within my budget, I went ahead with it. I have always felt that people trusted me and my judgment

Doug did not experience this same feeling of trust. He felt he was continually being told how to run his program by the school administration. He expressed his frustration by stating:

> The administrators have acknowledged that they don't know anything about special education. I say "well okay that's fine, I'll do

> the job I'm supposed to do and if you have any questions come and talk to me about it" but rather than that I get this pressure to do things according to some rules that really don't apply to special education.
>
> I'm continually told that what I'm doing is not right or at least not the way it should be done, without being asked "why are you doing it this way?" From a special education perspective I think what I am doing most of the time is right and I'm being told not to do it that way because administratively it doesn't work, and what they are telling me doesn't work.
>
> I would like to have administrators who have the courage to let me do my job, non-interference. That's kind of a negative way to say it. The positive way is to say "here are the rules for the school, you are the teacher, you are getting paid the big bucks, go out there and do your job." See me as a professional, rather than a lackey, or someone that needs to be checked up on. If I'm in charge of X dollars to run the program, then they should say "here is your money, use it wisely, as a professional" and at the end of the year I should be accountable for how I have used the money. I shouldn't have somebody constantly picking away at what I am doing and saying "No, I'm sorry you can't do this; No, I'm sorry you can't do that."

The teachers interviewed did not appear to have a problem with being held accountable for what they were doing with regard to their teaching. Gwen stated, "I really feel like we are accountable and that there is the expectation that we are going to do exactly what we said we were going to do."

Eleanor also expressed her belief of being accountable for what you do as a teacher, but also felt that how she did it was her responsibility:

> I think society has a right to tell me to get kids to be able to do certain things, to understand these concepts, or whatever. How I bring that about, I believe is my responsibility.
>
> I think that how you teach is highly individual and the only thing that anyone has a right to look at is that my students are safe, happy, treated with dignity, that there is some measure of discipline, and that they are achieving. I believe teachers have to be accountable for those things but how I achieve them and what I wear as I achieve that are my responsibility.

Doug shared his opinion of why the principals were expecting so much accountability from teachers. He felt that school boards were continually holding the principals more accountable, so the principals in turn felt the need to demand more accountability from the teachers.

**Supporting Teachers**

Teachers expressed strong feelings about principals showing support for teachers and their work. Several of the respondents felt they were indeed supported by their principals.

Fred stated, "the administration here is very supportive. Our principal is fantastic. He goes to the wall for you. You know that if there is a situation where there is a conflict, he is there."

Betty added, "I've had so much support over the years in terms of my own professional development. I was involved in the pilot projects for DMH and EMH groups and the principal was very supportive of me doing that."

Cliff commented, "the new principal came in and he offered teachers a bit more support. I think that's what made teaching in the school really great. I think a lot of the role of the principal is in support. Support for what you do in the class, for what you do in the hallways."

Gwen felt support from her administration, but qualified it by adding "she's very supportive if she knows that you are working hard. If she thinks you are sluffing, then forget it."

Hal expressed another form in which a principal can show support to teachers, that being caring about the teacher. Gwen shared this sentiment and felt that her principal also gave her the support she needed by caring about her.

Hal further commented that without support:

> It is very difficult for a teacher to operate. They can operate within their own classroom but if the support isn't there from the principal in maintaining good atmosphere in the school, most teachers will withdraw into their classrooms.

Three other teachers shared this feeling for the need to be supported by the principal with regard to student discipline. Most felt that this was being done.

Cliff felt that the support in his school was not always consistent. He talked of an instance where one teacher was supported and another was not for basically the same sort of concern.

**Awareness**. Teachers felt that one of the best ways the principal could show support for them was by being aware of what was happening in their classrooms. As Betty phrased it, "it is always nice just to have the principal come through and see what we are doing. It makes me feel that they support what I am doing and know what is going on so if I run into a problem they could help."

This is definitely the practice in Gwen's school, where she said the administrators "meet at the beginning of the week and they decide how many walk abouts they will do and which teachers they will see that week." She did feel this was valuable and helped the principal know what was going on in the classrooms. Along the same lines, Fred thought that "through walk throughs the principal really knows [their] teaching styles."

Eleanor commented that principals needed to be aware of teachers' needs and could do this by being in the classrooms more. She commented:

> I think [principals] have to endeavor to learn more about what is actually going on in classrooms. They have to try to understand

> what is the difference between teaching physics and English, what are the conditions that are necessary for teaching P.E. that are not necessary for teaching pipe trades.

Gwen talked about the principal in her school being aware of the work load on teachers right now and felt the principal was concerned for the staff. The administration was discussing changes to relieve some of the burden on teachers.

Gwen further noted, "I find our principal really notices what you are doing and he makes sure he comments on it so you feel like you are doing a good job. He really does try to recognize what is going on."

**Recognition**. All of the respondents spoke of recognition as being a crucial element in showing support for their work as teachers. This recognition usually needed to be only a simple thank-you or note of thanks.

Doug stated, "I love it when I get praise for what I do. If someone says 'Boy, you are doing a good job here' that really goes a long ways." He further commented, "I tend to get [positive] strokes from the people I work with directly but from the administration I don't."

Ann spoke favorably of her principal, saying:

> He would pat people on the back by talking to them about what a good job they were doing. The best people react well to this, so if the best people react that way, how insecure the others must feel. If principals could just go around and tell people how good they are, it would help them to say "Really? Is that something I'm really good at?"

The form that this recognition or praise took seemed not to matter, as the teachers spoke of several methods.

Betty spoke of the principal being "in the classes more and perhaps writing a little note to the teachers just talking about the positive things

that they saw or a note to the class thanking them for letting them visit their room."

Cliff mentioned walking into the classroom and saying "'gee, that was a good idea' or into the staff room when everyone else is around and say 'I really liked your idea.'" He added:

> I think pats on the back, especially at 3:30 in the day when you are struggling into the staff room and you've had a totally rotten day, for him to come up and say "I saw you had a rough day, hopefully you have a better one tomorrow" are really important. It takes the ability to see the teachers as people rather than teachers.

Fred, the first year teacher, told of a card he received in his box from the principal after Christmas welcoming him back to school and how it said he was really happy Fred was teaching in the school.

As Ann pointed out praise motivates even the best of teachers and as Eleanor explained "I think that for a lot of teachers, motivation is everything."

**Respect**. Teachers also mentioned that principals need to support them by showing respect for them and what they do. Eleanor expressed this by saying, "I think principals need to respect teachers more than they do, not view them as 'they' and not see them as people to manage."

Ann echoed these remarks:

> It seems to me that administrators have to start out with respect for teachers, and that has not been universally the case, especially for those principals who have somehow looked upon their task as being one thing and teachers as being the workers that they don't have to spend any time with. They have to develop a respect for what teachers do and then they have to start facilitating that.

How the principal works with teachers on an individual basis appears to be very important to the participants of this study. There was much discussion of how principals evaluated teachers, the amount of trust afforded to the teachers by the principals, and being seen as

professionals with the ability to deal with their classes in the manner they felt was best. The teachers also expressed a belief that principals needed to be aware of the happenings in the school and classrooms and show their support for teachers.

## Help From Family and Colleagues

The teachers interviewed talked at length about how principals could enhance their effectiveness in the classroom, but there were several other persons also discussed as having an influence on their teaching. The respondents often talked of how their family contributed to their efficacy as teachers. Colleagues were also identified as playing a very important part in the teachers' growth and development.

### Family Influence on Teacher Performance

When teachers mentioned their families as being a factor in their effectiveness as teachers, it was either in terms of the support they gave to them as teachers and people, or with regard to the understanding they have gained about their work and the people they work with by being a member of a family. Of the eight teachers interviewed, six were married and four of these had children.

Gwen spoke of being fortunate to have a husband that understood her involvement in teaching. She jokingly commented, "I'm very, very lucky that [my husband] works weird hours and likes sports." Gwen later mentioned having discussed with her husband the amount of time she was spending at her work now as compared to earlier in her career.

She talked of having to make some decisions and cutting back on some of the extra work she does.

Eleanor, whose husband is also a teacher, talked of the two of them being very involved in education. She noted, "I don't really know where my life leaves off and my job starts." When Eleanor spoke of her family and the amount of time she worked in the evenings and on weekends, she stated, "my children have been very understanding."

Ann referred to her husband as being "an emotional help." At one point in her career, Ann went through a hard personal time and she talked of how working through this has influenced her as a person and as a teacher. She stated:

> You start asking yourself "well, what is important?" Once you start asking yourself questions like that, as it relates to your personal life, you do that as it relates to school life and to learning. I would say that this has influenced my life, my teaching life and my awareness of all kinds of things and it has been good for me.

Three of the mother-teachers talked of having more understanding of what parents and families were going through with regard to raising children. They felt that their empathy was definitely a benefit to them as teachers.

Ann spoke of her parenting experience as being helpful to her in relating to other parents. She stated:

> The wonderful thing about it is that in the future years parents coming in are going to be doing it for the first time and I will have had my kids and I will have seen other kids and I will be able to assure them that their kids are really doing just the same as every normal human being and they can relax a bit and not be so tense. I would say that my parent teacher interviews are more chatting and commiserating groups a lot of the time.

Betty shared her feelings of being the "perfect mom" until they had their first daughter. She spoke of having all the answers and of doing all

the right things, and not understanding why parents did not just do these things to have "good" children. She commented:

> I think it has given me a lot of understanding of what parents go through, how tough it is to keep it together. It is too easy to say "you are not doing a good job." I think it is really difficult to understand kids and have all the empathy and concern and understanding of the family dynamics if you have not been in one.

Other respondents spoke of how their children have enabled them to understand the students they work with better. Eleanor spoke of the insights she gained from having her daughter:

> My daughter had more of a struggle with school. She was hard working, it didn't come easy to her. I think that has made me more sensitive to students. I found school easy so I think my daughter's struggles have made me more sensitive to the struggles of some of my students.

Ann talked of the appreciation she gained from her children of the need and ability for students to be both good students and involved in sports. She stated:

> I often used to resent the time kids would be spending on their sports as opposed to taking time to read and develop their minds. As a parent, I now realize that kids can be both good students and athletes. I've started to respect the need for the excitement of sports in some kids.

Being a member of a family has helped these teachers be better teachers in some way. It may have been through the support given by their family or by the insights gained about students and parents by being a part of a family.

## Colleagues Working Together For Teacher Growth

The teachers involved in this study often referred to their improvement in the classroom as being due to the assistance they obtained from their fellow teachers. This assistance could be in the form

of sharing resources and ideas, watching other's teaching practices, or even in showing support for each other. Teachers talked about the willingness of others to be helpful or not, a form of culture that appeared to exist in the schools.

**Sharing**

The most simple form of sharing that was talked about by the teachers was just that of passing on items that are of use to other teachers. Eleanor spoke of a department head whom she once worked with who often passed on useful things to her. She stated, "almost every day in my box there would be something; something to read, a good story. She'd say, 'This might work with your 20's.'"

Fred echoed this sort of sharing with a colleague. He commented, "If she has some things she'll just slip them into my mail box and I try to reciprocate. The sharing that goes on at this school is excellent."

Eleanor talked of her being pleased to have a principal who allowed her to help others in the school:

> I have for the past [several] years had an additional period of time because the administration recognized I was someone who did do things that I shared with other teachers.

The sharing of ideas was also greatly valued by the respondents as a method of improving their teaching. As Cliff stated, "I think, teaching in my class now, I am probably using 75% of other people's ideas." Gwen referred to a male teacher that had been teaching in her school that "just loves sharing. Anything he does you are more than welcome to come and get from him."

Most of the sharing of ideas that happened was a result of formal or informal interaction between colleagues. Gwen said that the team concept in her school had led to a great deal of sharing. She stated:

> Working with the team I found really helped this year. It is sort of informal, but we do have a lot of sharing of strategies for kids.

She also mentioned the benefit to her of the inter-school department head meetings:

> Department heads will get together and work on say, a Science exam, but while we are there, we hear four different ideas and they have gotten ideas from their teachers. There is a lot of "Oh, that activity doesn't work. What I do instead is . . ." Just that interaction is very, very valuable.

Ann also relayed experiences of having worked with very helpful colleagues. Much of this help was in the form of interaction, leading to a better understanding of students and teaching. She stated:

> Our interactions about the content of what we were teaching and the clarity for students of things we are asking them to do has helped me immensely. It also helped me to discover that talking about what you are doing is almost totally necessary, talking about the content and what you are teaching. It gives you a lot of perspective and prepares you for the perspectives your students are going to have.

Betty also talked of two people she "learned a lot from" by sharing feelings and ideas about their students.

Several of the respondents felt that their teaching was better in some way due to working together with other teachers, either at formally set up tasks or through self established projects.

Ann told of the benefits of a marking exercise that her department tried and how it caused interaction as people "defended what they call quality" when they marked an essay or other student assignment.

Gwen shared her experience of working with the teams in her school and how it led to discussion of what they were doing in different subject areas.

Eleanor talked of the valuable learning that occurred when she worked with a colleague that she felt had " complementary skills" to her

own and how they were good for each other, offering suggestions to improve each others' lessons.

The notion of sharing was viewed by these teachers as being easy to do and very valuable. Sharing of ideas and resources was seen as a major contributor to improved teaching.

**Observing**

Watching other teachers in action was something that all the teachers interviewed felt was important. Some admitted that they do very little of it and would like to be able to do more.

Ann talked of the value of being able to observe colleagues during her first year of teaching. She stated, "I saw a variety of classroom atmospheres, interactions between teacher and students, behaviors. It was invaluable in creating for me a perspective that I needed at the time, as I was wallowing in lack of confidence."

Doug expressed his desire for more access to other teachers in his school in order to learn from them. He stated:

> We hear about really good teachers but you never see them in action. How do I see the Math teacher down the hall who is a brilliant teacher? I never get a chance to see him.

Doug went on to say that one way to observe other teachers is to "create situations" where they will be doing something together with their class.

> When I am in a situation where I am working with another teacher I can watch the other teacher and I can say "that's a neat trick that guy's got."

Cliff talks of the openness that exists in his school, where it is comfortable for him to walk into a fellow teacher's classroom during a class and simply sit in the back and watch.

**Supporting**

Collegial support was viewed as being essential by all teachers interviewed. As a beginning teacher struggling to survive the first year, Fred appreciated the support of the teachers in his school. Such words as "you've got to sit down and take time for yourself or you will burn out. If you burn yourself out, you are no good for the kids" meant a lot to him.

Gwen relayed feelings of support from colleagues throughout her career. It was in the form of a helping hand, and in the form of a listening ear. She stated:

> Having Tom next door really helped. If I was having a bad day or if we disagreed with something that was happening, knowing that he was there to talk to helped. Someone that you could trust that it's not going to go to the wrong ears was very helpful.

Gwen also spoke very positively about the school she is presently in and of how her department is very supportive. She confided that "if I don't have an idea of how to do something, or if I'm struggling with something, I can ask the others and they will help. We get a lot of support in the department."

Hal talked of support as being the "caring and nurturing" he received from other teachers in the schools where he has taught. He stated, "for me there were certain colleagues at the school that helped me get involved in certain things, and in turn I helped them where I could."

Betty told how their staff try to plan activities or events to bring them closer together. She felt they "build a little bit of caring and consideration for everybody else."

**A Helping Culture**

The respondents spoke of being in schools that were "good about this" or "bad about that" and how it affected them as teachers. It appeared to be "just the way the school was" or the culture of the school.

Gwen's school has a "strong, cohesive staff and everybody pulls their weight. The people who are involved are not resenting it."

Hal talked about being involved "because of colleagues. They were involved so they got other people involved." He also talked of an earlier school as "having an environment that held [me] back. The staff and leader at the time were not as supportive as they could have been. They were not interested in professional growth."

Eleanor also referred to an earlier school she taught in as not helping her grow. She stated, "I got no help from anybody what so ever. It was a dreadful staff that way. They were not sharers at all."

The teachers interviewed obviously relied heavily upon each other for help with their teaching and their personal well being. This help can take many forms and can come from groups of teachers or from individuals that work well together. The teachers in this study were well aware of the value of their colleagues.

**Major Deterrents to the Growth and Effectiveness of Teachers**

It is apparent from their responses in these interviews that these teachers are very concerned with doing what is best for the students in their classrooms. The respondents talked of several things that have helped or could help them in their endeavor to teach well. In the discussions however, they also mentioned several stressors, or elements

related to their teaching, that they felt were inhibiting their growth and effectiveness. The major inhibitors mentioned were the amount of time required, the workload expected, and the political climate that existed within the province or jurisdiction.

## Time and Work Load

The problems of not having enough time and a teacher's ever expanding work load are major deterrents to teacher growth. The teachers interviewed sited time as the major reason they did not partake in more professional development.

One of the obvious problems with not having enough time for everything is that something must go. Betty commented that, for her, professional growth sometimes got left out. She said, "I don't find I have enough time to spend on trying to get all the work done that you have to do and then finding time to do the professional development."

This is a feeling shared with Gwen. She would, as a department head, like to spend more time in teachers' classes observing, but found she did not have the time. Gwen felt that she learns a lot from watching the other teachers.

Ann talked of the frustration that builds in herself and, she believes, in other teachers, from not having enough time to do the job the way they would like to. She says, "I think the hardest thing is when teachers know how a job should be done, but they have to do it in a way that is half of that or two thirds of that, or just not that at all. This discourages them." Of the amount of time she spends at her work, she stated:

> I enjoy it all. I don't find it outrageous. I do get to the point where things are just work and nothing else. We have been just loaded

> with marking and it is grueling. You don't have time to revitalize yourself by reading and just having fun.

Eleanor was concerned that the amount of time available to teachers in her school, due to some of the administration's decisions, would definitely affect the way that they teach. She is very happy with her career as a teacher, but expressed these concerns:

> We are going to have much larger classes, we are going to lose marking time, and it is going to drastically affect what we do as English teachers. The conditions under which one works, via the work load, I find is increasing steadily and I'm very distressed about that.

A concern was expressed by two teachers in that they were teaching in areas without specific university preparation. They both felt that this added extra stress to their work. Cliff commented, "It was tough. Some of the kids knew more than I did. That was the tough part." Fred added, "The spread I have in terms of subject areas has impeded me. If I taught all Social Studies I would be very content."

Somewhat of a different problem was encountered by Hal. He worked for a principal that used the competent teachers to the point of burn out. Hal stated, "if he thought that you were willing to do it and saw you as a competent teacher, then you kept getting loaded more and more and more. This led to staff turnover in the school."

Doug taught in a school with similar problems of work distribution, but this was brought on by the setting up of the timetable. In this school, the department heads were given extra preparation periods, even if the teachers had to be without any prep time to accommodate this.

## Political Climate

Something that surfaced in five of the interviews for this study, was the feeling of impeded future growth due to the political situation in the province of Alberta at the present time. Concern about what was presently happening was expressed for several reasons.

Some of the teachers, especially those new in the profession, were concerned about the prospects for continued employment the following year. Fred stated "I'm pretty nervous about having a job."

Two teachers who were taking courses during the year and in the summer felt this may no longer be worthwhile for them. As one said, "[the government] plans have put a kibosh on everyone's thoughts of everything."

Eleanor viewed the government changes as being unhealthy for education in that they will cause fear within the teachers. She stated:

> The worst thing that I think is going to come out of these cuts is the fear level among teachers. It is going to really intensify and I think it will be even easier to control teachers in directions that are simply not pedagogically sound.

Gwen felt frustrated at the lack of community support education in her area was receiving. She commented:

> I find it very hard right now with all the criticism in education. I find it very frustrating that I know I am putting in the hours and doing as much as I possibly can and the public doesn't see it that way for whatever reasons.

Another form of politics exists, that being the politics within the school jurisdiction itself. This also affected the way that three of the teachers felt about their respective school systems. They did not speak of this as if they were extremely affected by this, but rather more that it was just a fact of life in their districts.

Some of the comments were:

> In my system, the very qualities that I think make a good teacher or a good administrator, are not the qualities that are necessarily going to get that person to be an administrator.
>
> Our system is a very political world. Often times you have to prove to the superintendent that you are a loyal staff member otherwise you don't get ahead. The way to do that often is to do nasty things to teachers.
>
> One of our administrators is teacher first and administrator second. He will never move up in the district because of that, it is very clear.

Several factors can make it difficult for teachers to improve their performance in the classroom. The amount of time required to teach well and the work load that goes with the job, were seen as the major deterrents to continued growth. Teachers interviewed also felt that it was difficult to maintain a positive attitude toward their work with the existing provincial political happenings and lack of parental support. There also appeared to be concern about the attitudes towards teachers within some of their school jurisdictions.

## Themes

### Introduction to the Themes

During the process of analyzing the data, several underlying issues or themes became apparent to the researcher. These themes first emerged as ideas or thoughts about individual respondent's stories and then linked together in patterns or overlapping webs of meaning as transcripts were read and reread. In all, three major themes relating to teacher growth and development were identified.

### Teacher's Growth Needs Change Over Time

Inclusion of teachers with varying years of teaching experience in this study afforded this researcher the opportunity to reflect on how the needs of teachers change over time.

Teachers with fewer years of experience appeared to rely on somewhat different aspects for their growth in the classroom than did their more experienced counterparts. These teachers were more inclined to speak favorably of formal evaluation practices. Teachers with a greater number of years in the profession did not seem to need this structured form of appraisal, but rather relied more on self-reflection to assess the worth of their lessons.

Teachers in the first years of their careers find themselves in the situation of constantly trying to keep up with the daily demands of their work. Growth during this phase of their careers appears to be centered upon finding better methods to utilize class time as well as personal time to better meet all the demands of teaching. When this has been

accomplished to a certain level of mastery, as one participant of this study suggested, a plateau in professional growth is reached. Growth beyond this point requires a conscious effort and involves subtle changes in a teacher's teaching patterns, possibly brought on by changing job requirements or by concern for using classroom time to best effect. Ripely (1991) speaks of growth over time, stating, "a teacher cannot journey to complex levels of understanding about teaching and curriculum, classrooms and children, unless they have developed an understanding of some of the more basic aspects of these phenomena" (p. 253). This basic understanding takes time to acquire and is what teachers are gaining during their earlier years in the classrooms.

Conferences and workshops played an important role in the lives of less experienced teachers. Perhaps this is due to a greater need for survival skills and knowledge in several areas relating to their teaching. Teaching is all so foreign to them that they need ideas to deal with the events in the classroom and can gain much of the needed help through these workshops. The more experienced teachers in this study seemed very selective in what they regarded as worthwhile professional development. They were very specific in their needs and quite adamant that professional development days should not be a waste of their time. Task related activities or sharing with their colleagues was, to them, valuable for professional growth.

Teachers new to the profession must deal with a great deal of uncertainty. These teachers need the support and encouragement from their principals as well as from their colleagues. The less experienced teachers in this study were extremely grateful for the sharing and help provided by the other teachers. Teachers with more experience still need

this sharing and support from their colleagues, however, they are now able to contribute to others as well as receive assistance. They develop a strong sense of caring for each other, a form of professional collegiality. There appears to be less reliance on the approval of a principal to gain a sense of self-worth. This self-worth comes from experiencing success in the classroom and from contributing to the work of their colleagues.

## Growth Requires Time, Space, and Support

Three ingredients which this study suggests are essential for growth are time, space, and support. Time is a crucial factor in teachers' lives, regardless of how long they have been teaching. The concern for time does not appear to change with years of experience, only the manner in which the time is utilized. It would be reasonable to assume that teachers should become more efficient at their work and would be able to spend less time preparing for lessons. From talking to these teachers, this does not appear so. Most felt they were now spending more time on their teaching than they were when they began. This, along with the comments of some, suggests that the quality of their lessons is very important to these teachers and quality takes time.

Reflecting on the comments of the respondents, it appears that three kinds of time are being referred to. First there is the time required by every teacher in preparing daily lesson plans. Regardless of years of experience, this time is essential. Second is the time needed for teachers to learn from their own teaching. This requires time for teachers to reflect upon and evaluate strategies and approaches used in previous years. This notion aligns with Ripley's (1991) thoughts on "growth through reflection." He referred to reflection as, "looking to the past to

better understand the present" (p. 256). Third is the time often mentioned by the participants of this study; the time to spend with their colleagues. This could be time to talk about teaching or time to observe other teachers in their classrooms, both seen as valuable for professional growth.

The second ingredient necessary for growth, space, is very closely related to time. Teachers expressed a desire for space in their day which was not taken up with workload or extra responsibilities. This space would free them from demands of the classroom or supervision and would afford them an opportunity to pursue professional growth.

The third essential ingredient for growth apparent from this study was support. It mattered less where the support originated than the fact that it was present. Support from colleagues can be just as effective, if not more so, than support from the principal in providing the needed confidence and reassurance necessary for teachers to continue to strive for effective teaching and continued growth. Peer support through sharing, observing others, and exchanging ideas was seen as essential for teacher growth. A culture where teachers supported each other was highly valued. Principals who encourage a supportive environment and do exhibit genuine support to the teachers on their staff open the doors for teachers to pursue their own growth.

## The Attitudes and Abilities of Principals Impact on Teacher Growth

Teacher growth is highly dependent on the context of the school within which they teach. Several aspects of the school need to be in place if teachers are to be afforded the freedom to work towards

professional growth rather than towards daily survival. Many of these aspects are within the control of the principal thus depending upon that person's attitudes and abilities, much is decided as to whether or not the school becomes a place to grow.

Principals have a great deal of control over the tone of the culture in their schools. They can shape this culture by promoting and encouraging healthy attitudes towards learning for both students and teachers. Principals can also establish and maintain consistent discipline procedures within the school, allowing the teachers to do their job better. Controlling school routines can also enhance the teaching in the school as most teachers do not function well in a world of uncertainty. The respondents of this study expressed a desire for clarity of expectations and procedures. The principal is also the controller of the timetable, which greatly dictates the work of the teachers. Principals with the ability to organize this for the benefit of all will provide needed time and space to teachers.

Principals seen as having a focus on students were viewed as being most helpful. This regard for students was usually portrayed in caring actions towards students and in the establishment of school routines which led to comfortable learning environments. Another way to meet the needs of the students better is through promoting professional growth for teachers. Principals who view this as a priority will take action to enhance such growth. McElwain's (1989) study on principals as instructional supervisors refers to this. He discusses "various professional development activities undertaken at their schools to meet the needs of their students--behavioral, curricular, social, and cultural." McElwain further adds, "the principals' responsibility to meet the needs

of their students pervaded their meanings and actions as instructional supervisors" (p. 102).

In the present study, if advice regarding discipline was required, the principal was seen as valuable, however, most teachers interviewed appeared to learn from their peers about "teaching." Teachers did not often seek instructional or curricular information from principals but instead wanted principals to see them as experts in these areas with much to offer their schools. Principals who capitalize on this valuable resource are encouraging the continued involvement and growth of their teachers.

**Summary**

The eight teachers who participated in this study provided rich descriptions of the aspects which they felt have affected their personal growth as educators. Descriptions of impressionable events that helped shape them into the teachers they are today provided the researcher with a better understanding of how teachers develop professionally.

While discussing the notion of remaining effective in the classroom, these teachers revealed many practices that teachers engage in to help themselves remain effective or become better. These teachers were continually seeking ways to improve their teaching from sources such as books, courses, or colleagues.

Participants of this study felt very strongly that principals could indeed enhance a teacher's performance in the classroom. These teachers expressed a desire for the principal to be a supplier of resources, these being time, assistance, and items necessary for teaching.

A major topic of discussion in most interviews was how the principal interacts with the teachers in the school, either as a group or as individuals. The value an administrator places on collegiality in schools was discussed as being important. Teachers also expressed the need for a clear, shared school vision to enable all to work efficiently in the same direction. Principals' involvement in school activities was desirable to respondents as well.

Current methods of evaluation were felt to be of limited value to most of the teachers interviewed. Teachers expressed a desire to be trusted and respected more by their principals. This trust could be displayed in the form of viewing teachers as professionals and allowing them more autonomy in the classroom. Teachers did, however, feel the need to be accountable to the students and the public for their teaching.

People other than the principal seen as being important to the professional growth of teachers were families and colleagues. Teachers felt they learned many of their teaching practices from fellow teachers. Some of the participants spoke of an attitude or a culture within schools which could be beneficial or detrimental to their growth as teachers.

The teachers also spoke of factors which they felt were deterrents to their growth. Teachers felt a need for more time to devote to their profession but due to increased work loads, time was becoming increasingly scarce. The present political climate in the province was also mentioned as a deterrent to the teachers' growth.

During the analysis of the data, three major themes relevant to teacher growth emerged. It became apparent that teachers' growth needs changed throughout their careers; professional growth for teachers

requires time, space, and support; and that the attitudes and abilities of principals have an impact on teacher growth.

# CHAPTER 5

# SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

## Introduction

The concluding chapter of this thesis consists of three major sections. The first section contains an overview of the purpose of the study, a review of the research design, and a summary of the major findings and the themes which emerged from the study. The second section is on the researcher's personal reflections with regard to the research. The final section of this chapter contains implications for practice and future research relating to leadership for effective teaching.

## Summary

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to document teachers' answers to the question: In what ways can principals help teachers continue to be effective throughout their careers?

A number of more specific questions were proposed to serve as guides to the development of the study and to the analysis of the data. These questions, as they evolved through the process of the study, are as follows:

1. How do teachers themselves sustain their interest and effectiveness in teaching throughout the years?
2. How do principals facilitate the work of teachers?

3. Who else helps and in what ways do they help teachers remain effective?
4. What have been major deterrents to the continued growth and effectiveness for teachers?

**Research Design**

The research methodology for this study was designed to attain an understanding from the teachers interviewed as to how they felt principals could enhance effective teaching.

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview format to allow for the inclusion of unforeseen areas of relevancy to the study. The use of informal, open ended questioning allowed the respondents the freedom to exceed the limitations imposed by the questions, revealing information new to the researcher.

The interviews, which occurred over a two month period, were tape recorded for later transcription. Copies of their transcripts were provided to each respondent to allow the teachers to check their remarks for clarity of content and intent. Further contact was made with the teachers to discuss any changes or deletions to be made to the data.

The process of data analysis was ongoing from the time of the first contact with the teachers. The researcher's personal journal notations, field notes, and the interview transcripts were later submitted to several readings in an attempt to seek information relevant to the study.

Initial categories were derived from literature previously read and from first readings of the interview transcripts. A suitable framework for the organization of the categories was provided through the use of the

study's guiding questions. During the process of data analysis, themes relevant to the study emerged.

**Major Findings from the Data**

The eight teacher participants in this study provided valuable descriptive responses which helped to suggest answers to the four guiding questions of this study.

The responses from the teachers interviewed suggest that teachers do indeed partake in activities, on an ongoing basis, to remain effective in the classroom. The nature of these activities and their effectiveness varies greatly from teacher to teacher. Many of the respondents expressed a preference for informal, task related professional development activities, while others saw greater value in the more formally organized conferences and workshops. There seemed to be a shared feeling among participants of the study that much of their growth as teachers was provided through daily contacts with colleagues.

Several of the teachers interviewed had or were in the process of pursuing further education to enhance their skills in the school. This was seen as a way to seek new ideas and keep abreast of changing educational trends, as well as provide the teacher with a break from the classroom in order to rejuvenate.

With respect to the principal's ability to facilitate the work of teachers, the respondents made several valuable contributions. Examination of these comments seemed to suggest they be divided into three categories: providing resources to teachers, interactions with the staff as a whole, and working with individual staff members.

When talking about providing resources, the teachers referred to the principal being able to supply time for growth, assistance to teachers in performing daily tasks, information regarding workshops relevant to their teaching area, and, least frequently mentioned, the supplying of items necessary in the classroom.

Comments with regard to the principal interacting with the staff as a whole appeared to have four main aspects. The notion of helping to promote and encourage collegiality between staff members was seen as paramount to teachers. Effective communication with the staff, students and parents was another aspect the respondents felt strongly about. Teachers felt it important that the principal control the environment to allow for effective teaching. Finally, there was much importance placed upon the need for the principal to be involved in school activities, both curricular and extra curricular.

Referring to principals working with them as individuals, the teachers commented on the value and effectiveness of various evaluation methods. Also, the teachers talked of the need for them to feel trusted by the principal. There was expression of varying degrees of such trust felt by the teachers. To tie into the notion of trust, the teachers also expressed a desire for support from the principal shown by recognizing and respecting what teachers did.

Other people also viewed as being important to the effectiveness and growth of teachers were their families and colleagues. Families were said to supply much needed support and exhibit much understanding with regards to the busy life of a teacher.

Colleagues were felt to be essential to the growth and continuation of effective teaching. Teachers felt they learned most from observation of

and sharing with their colleagues. Much of the support teachers needed for their work came from those who worked around them.

The major deterrents for the growth of teachers that were mentioned were not unexpected. Concern was expressed about the amount of time teachers had to invest to maintain daily exercises and that this workload was growing. There was also grave concern for the political situation as it presently exists in the province. Many of the respondents expressed feelings of frustration and discouragement due to these factors.

**Summary of the Themes Emerging From the Data**

From the analysis of the data, and upon examination of the researcher's personal journal regarding the interviews, three major themes relevant to this study emerged.

It became apparent to the researcher that teacher's growth needs changed over time. The needs of teachers change as they gain experience. Teachers at the beginning of their career require different forms of assistance in order to grow than do experienced teachers.

Three ingredients that appear to be necessary for teacher growth are time, space, and support. Expecting teachers to grow in their profession without these ingredients seems unrealistic.

The final theme presented in this thesis relates to the Principals' attitudes and abilities. This person's beliefs and personal skills have a major affect on the growth of teachers. It is essential that principals value growth and have the ability to establish an environment where teacher growth is possible.

## Reflections on the Literature

While reflecting upon the findings of this study as they relate to the corresponding literature, I found that much of the information provided by the participants supported the notions presented in the literature. I was, in fact, quite surprised at the similarities in what I had previously read and the comments by the teachers. In discussing these relationships, it is convenient to do so according to the major areas explored in the literature review, these being leadership, school culture, and professional growth and development.

**Leadership**. Robbins (1988) categorizes the theories relating to leadership into three basic approaches: Trait Theories, Behavioral Theories, and Contingency Theories. He contends that the Contingency Theories are the most relevant in describing leadership, as the others have severe limitations. Contingency Theories consider relationships of the staff members as well as the working environment. This notion was supported by the teachers interviewed.

To a great extent, I agree with his analysis of these theories, but comments made by the respondents of this study suggest to me that trait theories cannot easily be dismissed. Robbins suggested traits which were felt to be necessary for a leader to portray in order to be successful: intelligence, charisma, decisiveness, enthusiasm, strength, bravery, integrity, self-confidence, and task related knowledge. Many similar, or in many cases, the exact same characteristics were viewed by the teachers in this study as being essential for a principal to be successful in leading a school. The traits or personal characteristics of the principal

appear to be very important in determining effective leadership. But it is not the traits, perhaps, but what they signify that is important. Integrity suggests trust, enthusiasm, enjoying what you do, hence producing a positive climate for students and teachers. The teachers wanted a person who would be cooperative, model and encourage collegiality, and show respect, trust, and interest in what teachers did without either disregarding them or controlling their actions.

Bolin (1989) contends that "leadership in the 1990's becomes a support function for teachers rather than a mechanism for the control of teaching" (p. 8). This idea was strongly supported in the responses of the teachers interviewed. Teachers spoke often of desiring the support of their principals. This support was often tied with the notion of allowing the teacher to do what they felt was best in their classroom, thus shedding the restrictions of control by a principal.

Giving up the need for control of every situation leads to the empowerment of teachers. Sergiovanni (1991) maintains that "empowerment is the natural complement of accountability" (p. 137). The feeling of having more control of their environment and being accountable for the outcome was indeed mentioned often by the teachers in this study. In all cases, the teachers expressed no fear of being held accountable for the outcomes of their classes, but to go along with this they felt the need to have a greater say in the daily running of their programs.

Blumberg and Jonas (1987) state that "to be considered competent, to be listened to, to be asked to collaborate with one's organizational supervisor, . . . produces a feeling of being valued" (p. 62). This concept was repeatedly referred to by the participants of this study. The teachers

felt they had much expertise and knowledge to offer for the betterment of their schools but did not feel they were being asked for input. There was general agreement that the principal had to have the ultimate say in school matters, but consensus was that these principals could not be experts in all fields and should take advantage of the expertise of the teachers on their staffs. This was being done in some schools and these teachers felt they were a more valued member of their staff with special skills to offer.

This notion of valuing the staff of a school is also referred to by Barth (1988). He proposed a list of nine steps for the principal that wished to work towards shared leadership. These steps included relinquishing control, entrusting teachers, involving teachers in decision making, believing in teachers, and admitting ignorance. Concern for many of the concepts he put forward was repeatedly expressed by the teachers interviewed, thus the study appears to lend support to this literature.

Barth (1990), in referring to Instructional Leadership, contends that the principal in today's schools "can no longer be the master teacher well versed in [all subjects]" (p. 133). This idea is well supported by the comments of the teachers in this study. Most respondents felt that the teachers were the experts in the classroom as far as subject matter was concerned, but that there was still much the principal could help them with. The role of the principal in the classroom for these teachers seemed to depend partially on what stage in their careers the teachers were at. For the newer teachers, the principal could offer help with regard to classroom management, as well as providing encouragement and support. Teachers later in their careers still needed the support but

needed less advice as to classroom practices. The notion of the principal as the master teacher was not present in most of these teachers' discussions.

Blase (1987) presents a concept which emerged during the interviews, that being the "willingness of the principal to mix with the teachers and students" (p. 597). He felt this displayed a sense of caring and dedication to the students and staff, and further that it supported the staff in their work. Feelings in line with this were presented by the respondents. Some teachers felt that if the principal was involved in the school's extracurricular activities, it demonstrated this support. Others went so far as to express a desire for the principal to mix with the teachers on an informal basis to develop a feeling of interpersonal understanding which would lead to better professional relationships.

Another notion of effective school leadership which the study appears to support is the notion of the principal being a problem solver. Beck and Murphy (1993) feel that "principals who solve problems are portrayed as those who are able to secure materials, money, time, and information" (p. 151). This is definitely in tune with the feelings expressed by the participants of this study. Several teachers spoke of their desire for the principal to supply them with time and information. These were the two most sought after resources. Materials and money were also mentioned, but to a lesser extent. Money was not seen as a great benefit to the teachers unless it could be utilized to provide the teachers with more time to attend to their duties.

**Culture**. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) contend in their writings that "a supportive school climate, the presence of collegial values, shared decision making, and a school culture provide a sense of purpose and

define for teachers a shared covenant" (p. 69). All the participants of this study expressed a desire to be effective in the classroom and to aid colleagues. I felt a sense of integrity present in their stories, that if the environment was appropriate, the teachers would, and in many cases did, commit their heart and soul to educating students.

The very characteristics expressed as being essential by Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) were repeatedly referred to by the respondents as well. These teachers agreed that the principals could indeed set the tone or structure the environment of a school to accommodate the moral intuition of the teachers. They thought that a sense of "collegial values" was present and would flourish and grow if principals invested some effort to allow for this.

Duke (1986, p. 32) speaks of "fashioning a vision which an entire school can commit heart and mind to" and he contends that this is "one of the central challenges facing contemporary school administrators." Definite support for Duke's comments were reflected in the participants' responses. Some felt it nearly impossible to have a school vision that all teachers could totally commit to, however it was also felt essential that principals work with teachers to attain a vision most will accept. Most of the teachers interviewed express discontentment at how their school vision or mission statements were derived. Many felt that it was more the principal's vision, making it hard for the teachers to "commit heart and mind" to it.

The dissatisfaction expressed with regard to working towards a meaningful shared vision tended to support Bolin's (1989) contention as well that principals should work with the staff to "negotiate goals to

which all are committed" (p. 87). Working together to attain such goals will establish an essential sense of unity within a staff.

Johnson (1990) proposes that the school as a work place can greatly affect the satisfaction of the teachers, thus affecting their work within the school. This appears to be supported in the comments of the teachers as well as the feelings I sensed from some teachers. Some teachers spoke of schools from their past as being "dreadful places" where it was not easy to work or grow in such an environment. Most expressed a feeling of contentment with their present school, however, in discussions with them, I sensed a feeling of displeasure within some. Even though they stated they liked their present school and what they were doing, I sensed they were not totally happy and would have liked to be doing something else, or teaching under different circumstances. I sensed a disheartened feeling, a feeling of hopelessness in a couple of the participants of this study.

**Professional Growth and Development**. Blumberg and Jonas (1987) share a metaphor regarding being welcome into the classroom. It sends the message that if a teacher does not psychologically accept a principal or anyone else into their classroom whose intent is to help, the process will be of little value to that teacher. This metaphor repeatedly returned to my mind as I listened to teachers talk of having the principal in their room for the purposes of evaluation, but not really valuing the principal's opinion or the process that was taking place. If the principal is to be of any value in helping a teacher, the entire process must be viewed by the teacher as being worthwhile. Also, the advice of the principal must hold some credibility. How will this credibility be gained? That appears to be a matter of past relationships and experiences with

the principal, prior to the classroom visit. The effectiveness of the communication between principals and teachers appears to be imperative if principals are to help teachers.

With regard to a teacher's professional growth, Seyfarth (1991) maintains that "peer observation alone appears to be as effective as peer coaching" (p. 186). There appears to be much support for this belief in the comments of the teachers interviewed. Several teachers spoke of the value of observing their colleagues and expressed a desire for some structure or time allotment to allow for this. These teachers felt that principals could and should structure the school timetables to accommodate collegial visits.

The three conditions listed by Wildman and Niles (1987) as being necessary for teachers to learn and to improve their teaching were repeatedly reinforced by the respondents. These conditions, autonomy, collaboration, and time, were undoubtedly viewed as essential by all teachers interviewed. Frustration was expressed by some at the lack of autonomy, while others felt it was the autonomy provided by their principal which had helped them to grow. There was unanimous agreement amongst the participants that working with colleagues informally led to more effective teaching and professional growth. Time was viewed as the critical ingredient to effective teaching and growth. Many of the teachers expressed their desire for more time to work with colleagues and their dismay at the lack of time anticipated in the future due to further cut-backs to the funding of education.

A further condition necessary for the growth of teachers mentioned by Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) is the need for teachers to be supported by their principal. This was mentioned several times by the

respondents as being important to them. When these teachers felt they were being supported, they approached their teaching with greater confidence and enthusiasm. Teachers commented that this support could be displayed in many forms. Principals could become involved in classroom or other activities, they could recognize or reward teachers' efforts with praise, they could help teachers with certain functions, or they could simply display a sense of caring for the teacher as a person.

The stories provided by the teachers in this study also brought forth notions not so well covered in the literature previewed. One such idea was that of teachers seeking autonomy, while at the same time desiring support from colleagues and administrators. This at first appear contradictory in that autonomy suggests being left alone whereas support implies someone being close to what the teacher is doing. As was relayed by some of the participants, administrators who are sensitive to the needs and feelings of teachers are able to provide both conditions.

Much support was presented through the comments of the participants of this study for the literature relating to school leadership, school culture, and the professional growth and development of teachers. Surprisingly few experiences or feelings shared by these teachers refuted the present literature in these areas.

**Personal Reflections**

Reflecting upon the interviews of the eight teachers who participated in this study, I feel I have been afforded two major personal benefits with this study. First, I have reaffirmed many of my own personal feelings towards the value of my colleagues. Second, as a future administrator, I have been allowed the time to examine and think about how I may be

able to best accommodate effective teaching by the teachers with whom I will work.

With regard to the value of my past colleagues, this study has provided me with the time to think about my own growth as a teacher and realize how much I owe to the people with whom I have worked. As the respondents commented on their own growth, I continually reflected upon similar experiences from my past. I have been fortunate to have worked along side many talented, caring individuals.

This brings to mind the second lesson to me from this study, how as an administrator I may be able to help others. Having worked for several different administrators, I realize that my personal growth as a teacher was enhanced more while working with some than others. Discussing their experiences with the participants of this study and reflecting upon my own personal experiences has given me insights as to what I may be able to do for my colleagues in the future, both as a teacher and as an administrator.

All the participants of this study expressed the desire for their principals to support them in their positions as teachers. This support, which was enjoyed more so by some than others, gave the teachers the freedom and confidence to venture forth and try new things. This in turn leads to teacher growth.

I do not feel it is necessary for principals to motivate teachers to grow. Teachers are, for the most part, very committed to what they are doing, have much expertise in their field, and will work towards better teaching on their own if afforded the opportunity. This is where the principal comes in. It is very hard to venture into new areas and try new ideas without the support of the school administration. There is an

underlying sense that principals control situations and without their support, teachers are very vulnerable. If such support is nonexistent, teachers will stay with the tried and proven practices and lessons, thus limited growth will be experienced.

I believe the principal can accommodate effective teaching best by establishing a non threatening, supportive environment in the school. I further believe that principals should continue to pursue growth in the field of education, thus being an example to teachers as well as students. Administrators' actions will speak much louder than their words, and these actions will have positive or negative affects on the school.

## Implications for Practice and Future Research

Much present day literature is from the perspective of the administrator and too little reflects the world of teachers. Teachers even on supportive staffs were focused on students and their work, while administrative issues were resolved around them, without their input. There needs to be greater recognition of teachers as valued professionals in administrative literature. This section presents some possible suggestions for practice and future research related to enhancing teacher growth.

### For Practice

There are significant implications from these findings for school administrators.

It is apparent from this study that one thing principals can do to help teachers remain committed to education is to communicate clearly

and honestly with the teachers. Teachers need to know where they stand and what is happening in the school as much as possible. In the ever-changing, uncertain day of a school, teachers need clear messages from their leaders. Saying one thing and doing another is a sure way to shake a teacher's confidence in the school and their working environment.

Principals can see from this study also that teachers desire some input into their environment. Most teachers are highly trained, very skilled individuals in their field with much to offer the systems they work in. These people want to help and, given the chance, will contribute to make the school a better place for learning. This involvement or input can be in the form of establishing shared school mission statements which truly consider the teachers' opinions, or on a more ongoing basis, by principals tapping into the wealth of knowledge the teachers have when dealing with daily occurrences.

There is a need for administrators to let teachers know what they are feeling and why they feel this way. It is imperative that principals are honest with the teachers in their schools if they wish to have the teachers' support in daily affairs as well as with major decisions.

This study shows that principals need to understand and respect what teachers do and portray this in some manner to the teachers. Teachers need to be told that they are doing a good job and that they are appreciated. Such encouragement makes teachers feel that their efforts are worthwhile.

Principals need to show support for the teachers with whom they work; support for their decisions regarding student discipline, support in their dealings with teachers, and support for their classroom practices. The teachers interviewed admitted they receive most of their support

from colleagues, but would greatly appreciate having the support of their principals. This support can be shown by being more directly involved in the daily life of the teachers and talking with them about their work. This form of support does not leave teachers feeling all alone in their struggles.

It is revealed in this study, not surprisingly, that there is a need for administrators to provide time to teachers. Time is an essential ingredient if teachers are to improve their teaching. Principals and school jurisdictions' senior administrators need to realize that teachers grow mostly through interactions with their peers, not by way of conferences and workshops. Such workshops serve a purpose but the former appears to be more essential for teachers to grow professionally. If collegiality can be encourage and fostered, teachers will continue to grow and learn from each other.

It is also imperative that school district administrators realize the time necessary for teachers to prepare effective lessons for their students. This time is slowly being eroded away, leaving teachers barely enough time to complete required marking, and very little time for preparation of exciting lessons or for professional growth.

**For Future Research**

The interviews conducted in this study portray one viewpoint of very complex settings. Perhaps it would be beneficial to conduct further research exploring the principals' interpretations and opinions of the subjects referred to by the teachers. Interviews of principals could be conducted to find out how they attempt to facilitate professional growth in teachers.

A study similar to the one conducted in this thesis could be conducted in the form of a case study. One school could be subjected to closer examination, seeking to establish the relationship between the teachers and the principal. The focus could be on how the principal helps the teachers, examining this question from the viewpoint of the principal and the teachers. The researcher could conduct this study internally over a greater length of time, allowing for enhanced personal insight on the part of the researcher.

Most of the teachers partaking in this study viewed the present systems for professional development in their districts as being of little value. Perhaps documentation of alternatives and teachers' experiences of and reactions to them would be helpful. This could lead to more effective professional development days for educators.

Many present teacher evaluation practices were viewed as being of little benefit to teachers. Perhaps further research should be undertaken to develop effective teacher evaluation procedures, or to explore why the more effective methods mentioned by some teachers are not being more widely utilized.

## Concluding Statement

Being a teacher for 13 years has afforded me the fortunate opportunity to experience relationships with many effective teachers and administrators. The individuals with whom I have worked and whom I consider to have been valuable contributors to the field of education all seemed to have at least one trait in common; the love for and the

willingness to help those around them. This applies to their students and colleagues alike.

This desire to help those around them appears to be a key ingredient necessary for educators to strive for better education. It encourages teachers to strive for greater achievements for the sake of their colleagues and their students. It encourages administrators to think how they can best help teachers in their endeavors to help students.

Effective teachers do not just happen. They are the product of much hard work on the part of the teachers themselves and judicious actions by the administrators of their schools. Teachers will be most effective in the education of students when principals value their contributions and give them the freedom and support they need in the classroom.

I attended a timely retirement reception this week for the teachers in my school district. The thank you speeches by two of the teachers seemed to summarize much of my findings in this study. An award winning Special Education teacher thanked his principal for being allowed to run his Special Education program as it should be, that is, different from the regular programs. A retiring Grade One teacher thanked her principals of the last 29 years for allowing her the freedom in her class to teach as she saw best. Teachers have much expertise and need the support of their administrators to do what they know how to do best, to teach their students.

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## Appendix A

## Correspondence

**Information and Consent Letter**

University of Alberta
Department of Educational Administration
7-104 Education North
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 2G5

March 2, 1994

Dear _____,

Thank you for expressing a willingness to participate in my thesis research. During our earlier discussion, I mentioned that my area of study is concerned with leadership for continued teacher effectiveness. More specifically, I am trying to find possible answers to the question: In what ways can principals help teachers continue to be effective throughout their careers?

In terms of your involvement, I am asking for your willingness to take part in an in-depth interview to share your perceptions on this subject. The interview will be tape recorded and you will be permitted to read the parts to be used to assure clarity of content and intent. Following the initial analysis of the data, follow-up interviews may be conducted to allow for expansion of concepts identified from the first interview. I feel the perspective provided by you, as an experienced and dedicated teacher will provide vital information for this study.

Please be assured that your involvement in this study will be treated with complete anonymity and confidentiality. Your name and the names of any schools or colleagues mentioned will remain confidential. If you decide that you no longer wish to participate in the study, you can withdraw at any time.

If you have any questions about this project now or later, please feel free to contact me at 352-2436 or my research advisor, Dr. M. Haughey, at 492-7609.

If you are willing to participate in this study, would you please complete the following consent form. Thank you for your help and interest in this project.

---

I, _____ give permission for Clint Neis to include me in the study as described above.

_____ _____
Signature Date

**Follow-up Letter**

April 13, 1994

Dear _____,

Here is a transcript of our interview regarding teacher growth. To date, I have done a preliminary review of the transcripts, and I am now in the process of doing a more thorough analysis. Please feel free to add to, change, or delete any of the information in the transcript. I would like to make contact with you by the end of April to give you the opportunity to share any further thoughts you may have with regard to the transcript of our interview. This contact could be made by telephone or we could arrange to meet if that is your preference.

I will contact you by telephone before the end of April. If you have any questions, please contact me at ___-____. Again, thank you for your time and valuable insights.

Yours truly

Clint Neis

## Appendix B

## Interview Guide

**Interview Questions**

A. Teachers Background

1. How long have you been teaching? In this district? In this school?
2. What subjects are you now teaching?
   -Is this the area that you were trained in? If not, how did you end up teaching in this subject area?
   -How do you feel about the subjects that you are now teaching?
3. What kind of school-related extra-curricular activities are you involved with in the school?

B. Feelings Towards Their Career

1. How do you feel about your career as a teacher now?
   -How does this compare to how you felt when you started teaching?
2. What are your feelings about the school you are presently teaching in?
3. Do you have any plans for changes in your career in the future?

C. Professional Growth

1. What does professional growth and development mean to you?
2. Do you think you are a better teacher now than when you started?
   -why or why not?
3. Can you think of any specific experiences that have helped you with your teaching?

-How have they helped?

4. Have there been any individuals that have helped you become a better teacher?

   -How have they helped you?

5. Do you do specific things to improve your teaching?

   -If so, what do you do, and who helps you?

6. What things do you think impede growth for teachers?
7. Has your private life or family life influenced your teaching?
8. What does the phrase "effective teacher" mean to you?

D. Principals' Role In Teacher Development

1. Do you think that principals can help teachers become or continue to be "effective"?
2. Do you feel that principals have helped you in your classroom?

   -if so, in what ways? (examples)

3. What aspects of the school have the principals controlled which helps you with your teaching? -tell me about these
4. What other aspects of the school do you think principals could control that would help you?
5. Do you feel the principal plays a part in your growth as a teacher? -If so, how and can you give examples?
6. Can you think of any other ways that principals could help you be a more effective teacher?

## Appendix C

## Sample Transcripts

**Sample #1**

C Do you do any specific things right now to improve your teaching?

F Oh ya. I've just gone through the second batch of evaluations from the students. I always ask the kids. I did that in the middle of October when I was about a month into actual teaching. I said, "What is going right, What's going wrong." That's one thing I did and I just got a second batch of them in from my Soc. classes and it helps. Unless I ask, sometimes I may not see that things are not going along that well. I found the first time I asked the kid's for ideas, they asked me why don't we have a current events quiz every 2 weeks instead of every one week and I thought well that's less prep for me and we can still keep it up and it is less marking for me. Little things like that, little changes really help. That's one thing I do and I always sit down and think, "OK how did this go, how did this work." I've got one Soc. classes that hasn't really done any group work since the start of the year, or since about the end of October because they couldn't handle it. I just weaned them away from it and we will eventually get back to it.

C Can you think of any specific experiences that have helped you with your teaching this year? Any things that have happened that have made you better?

F I think one of the best things was attend a conference. They have a first year teachers conference here for central Alberta teachers. That sure helped me. That was one thing that was really good. They had a workshop on setting up a marks system and my marks have been so much easier to do since then.

C What time of the year was that?

F It was in October. It was at a real good time because I was just about feeling that I was going to sink and I went there and I talked to others. Everyone else was a first year teacher, and I just looked around and I thought, "Wow, I'm not in as bad a shape as I thought."

C How did you find out about this?

F They told us right from the start, the school district. and on our new teachers' orientation they mentioned that we would all be allowed to go to it.

C What other kinds of things did they do at the conference?

F It was workshops. One was on classroom management, one was on personal wellness, just little things to take care of yourself, relaxing, eating right, that sort of thing, one was on planning, effective

planning. It wasn't that great of a session and another was just a sit down and talk with your peers, which was really helpful. It was super. It was a real key thing for me.

C Have there been any specific individuals in the school that have really helped you?

F Yes, I would say that the P.E. teachers has. It's his third year but we've become really good friends and he's been the guy to echo the message, "Come on and stop. You've got to sit down and take time for yourself or you will never be any good. If you burn yourself out, you are no good for the kids. It doesn't matter if they get that essay back tomorrow, it can wait." The other basket ball coach has really been helpful. He helped me with how to deal with parents. He sat down with me one Sunday in the school and we just talked for about an hour. I was a little nervous before report cards went out and he just gave me some really good practical suggestions. Everyone has been great.

C So there has been staff support and admin. support?

F All of our administrators have been in for evaluations and their evaluations are so constructive. They come in and it is all very constructive. They point out 3 or 4 things that we can consider to improve on and they always follow up on it. They are always there and they always note when you are making progress. One vice-principal has been really good and helpful. The other has been good, not so much in teaching information, but as someone to talk to. He is very friendly and he's there.

**Sample # 2**

C Professional growth .... What does professional growth and development mean to you?

A It is so complicated, so complicated. It has something to do with growing in the content of your subject area, it has to do with methodology of teaching, I think. It has to do with overall development of an understanding of what education is for kids. That philosophy you think you have when you come out of school is not developed. You develop it as you go along. It is a responsibility in participating in school and professional matters, in the actual workings of those things. It takes a person awhile to see what is necessary and what the part of the teacher is in all that.

C What about yourself? Your personal self. Not saying anything to do with teaching. Do you feel you have to grow as a person so you can apply that to better teaching?

A Yes. I do. I think people teach what they are, these four aspects that I identified, can't develop separately from the teacher growing as a human being. How do you get people growing as human beings? I guess it's just something that happens to people, but it doesn't happen to all people. I think my subject area helps, I teach English, it might be very different if I were a typing teacher.

C Can you think about your first years of teaching, what you were doing then compared to what you are doing now. Where or when was your most effective teaching?

A Right now, I know what it is I am trying to get kids to do. Before I was kind of experimenting. I have a few of the old assignment sheets. I was doing a good job of creating those analogies and trying to get them to understand them. But now I get right into the selections, I think this is better and I know exactly what it is I want them to be able to do.

C From your experience then, you have gained this insight?

A As far as assessment too. When I first started teaching I had no idea how to tell how one kid was better at his work than another. You could read something and tell what is better writing, but I had no way of explaining to the kids what was better, how he could fix it, or improve. I am way better at that now. I have more confidence in the methods I use for any particular thing.

C So what has made you better? Just experimenting or have you purposely sought to get better in those areas? Or was it just time itself?

A I have always been a person who has wanted to do better as a teacher. I felt like a fraud as a teacher. I'm not sure why because I liked school but I was bound and determined I wasn't going to be a lousy teacher. I had a few lousy teachers in my schooling and I wasn't going to be one of these people. I was always alert to "how do you do it? You seem to be an effective teacher", and then I would listen to what people did and ask them what they did, then observe them if I could. I was discouraged in my first year because I wanted to be way more effective than I was. As a first year teacher you always feel like a failure because you don't know how to read the signs of success. I had a school that could hire a sub for me and send me out to another school for a day where I could go into other peoples classrooms and I came home realizing that I was a better teacher than 3 out of 4 teachers that I observed and they were experienced teachers.

C A lot of observation is helpful for gaining confidence as well as gaining skills.

A Yes, and I say a variety of classrooms atmospheres, interactions between teacher and student, behaviors. It was invaluable in creating for me perspectives that I needed at that time because I was wallowing in lack of confidence.

C What kinds of things do you think impede teacher growth?

A Frustration, certainly.

C From what?

A I would say from anything, but I would say that as far as anyone has control over it, when principals set up certain situations and ways of being, and then contradict those through actions, that frustrates teachers and I think that teachers can not stand that.

C Saying one thing and doing another?

A That's right. I would say that any time contradictions that affect teachers are in place you had better watch them because you are going to make things impossible for teachers. It seems to me that administrators have to start out with respect for their teachers, and that has not been universally the case, especially for those principals who have somehow looked upon their tasks as being one thing and teachers as being the workers that they don't have to spend any time with. They have to develop a respect for what teachers do and then they have to start facilitating that.

C That goes along with the notion that the principal is a servant to the teachers in your school.

A Yes, absolutely, because the teachers are the one that are in there trying to do things. If they need some things, whether it be phone calls home that they don't have time to make, or sometimes it's as simple as maybe there are no telephones around the school so that by the time the teacher gets to a telephone to phone somebody's parents to give them a little pep talk about something, you've forgotten what you were going to do because you've had 27,000,000 different interruptions before that and you never get to it and then you start ignoring it. So it's providing resources people need, it's maybe even doing things for teachers. This business of doing everything for central office and nothing for the teachers in your school is nuts.